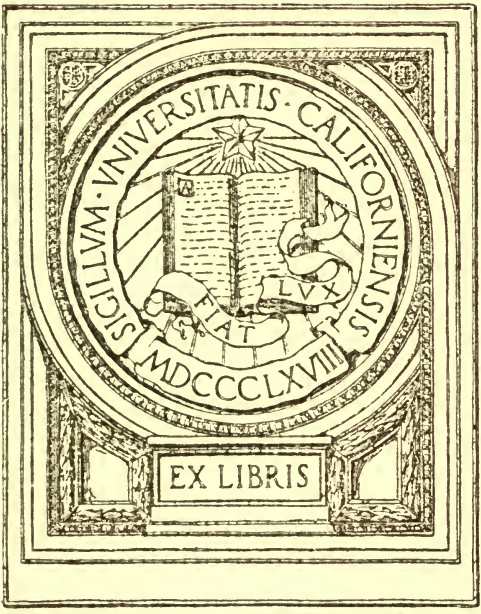
As It Was Written

A Jewish Musician's Story

By

Sidney Luska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BY

SIDNEY LUSKA

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AS IT WAS WRITTEN.

I.

VERONIKA PATHZUOL was my betrothed. I must give some account of the circumstances under which she and I first met each other, so that my tale may be clear and complete from the beginning.

For a long while, without knowing why, I had been restless—hungry, without knowing for what I hungered. Teaching music to support myself, I employed all of the day that was not thus occupied in practicing on my own behalf. My life consequently was a solitary one, numbering but few acquaintances and not any friends. In my short intervals of leisure I was generally too tired to seek out society; I was too obscure and unimportant to be sought out in turn. Yet, young and of an ardent temperament, doubtless it was natural that

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I should have been dimly conscious of something wanting; and, not prone to self-analysis, doubtless it was also natural that I should have had no distinct conception of what the wanting something was. Besides, it would soon be summer. The soft air and bright sunshine of spring awoke a myriad vague desires in my heart. I strove in vain to understand them. They were all the more poignant because they had no definite object. Twenty times a day I would catch myself heaving a mighty sigh; but asking, "What are you sighing for?" I had to answer, "Who can tell?" My thoughts got into the habit of wandering away—would fly off to cloud-land at the most inopportune moments. While my pupils were blundering through their exercises their master would fall to thinking of other things—afterward impossible to remember what. From morning to night I went about with a feeling of expectancy—an event was impending—presently a change would come over the tenor of my life. I waited anxiously, on the alert for its first premonitory symptom.

I had taken to strolling through the streets

at evening. One delicious night in May, I found myself leaning over the terrace at the eastern extremity of Fifty-first street. The moon had just risen, a huge red disk, out of the mist and smoke across the river, and was turning the waves to burnished copper. Through the open windows of the neighborhood escaped the sounds of quiet talk, of laughter, of piano playing. Now and then a low dark shape, with a single bright light gleaming like a jewel at its side, and spars and masts sharply outlined against the sky, slipped silently past upon the water. The atmosphere was quick with the warmth and the scent of spring. I stood there motionless, penetrated by the unspeakable beauty of the scene. The moon climbed higher and higher, and gradually exchanged its ruddy tint for its ordinary metallic blue. By and by somebody with a sweet soprano voice, in one of the nearest houses, began to sing the *Ave Maria* of Gounod. The impassioned music seemed made for the time and place. It caught the soul of the moment and gave it voice. I could feel my heart swelling with the crescendo : and then how it leaped and thrilled when the

singer reached that glorious climax of the song, "*Nunc et in hora mortis nostræ!*" At that instant, as if released from a spell, I drew a long breath and looked around. Then for the first time I saw Veronika Pathzuol. Her eyes and mine met for the first time.

"A lady, young, tall, beautiful, strange, and sad"—and pale. Her face was pale, like an angel's. The wealth of black hair above it and the dark eyes that gazed sadly out of it rendered the pallor more intense. But it was not the pallor of ill-health; it was the pallor of a luminous white soul. As I beheld her standing there in the moonlight scarcely a yard away from me, I knew all at once what it was my heart had craved for so long a while. I knew at once, by the sudden pain that pierced it, that my heart had been waiting for this lady all its life. I did not stop to reflect and determine. Had I done so, most likely—nay, most certainly—I should never have had to tell this story. The words flew to my tongue and were spoken as soon as thought.—"Oh, how beautiful, how beautiful!" I exclaimed, meaning her.

"Very beautiful," I heard her voice, clear

and soft, respond. "It is almost a pain, the feeling such intense beauty gives,"—meaning the scene before us.

"And yet this is every-day, hum-drum, commercial New York," added another voice, one that jarred upon my hearing like the scraping of a contre-bass after a cadenza by the flute. She was leaning on the arm of a man. I was at the verge of being straightway jealous, when I observed that his hair and beard were snowy and that his face was wrinkled.

We got into conversation without ceremony. Nature had introduced us. Our common appreciation of the loveliness round about broke the ice and provided a topic for speech. After her first impulsive utterance, Veronika said little. But the old man was voluble, evidently glad of the opportunity to express his ideas to a new person. And I was more than glad to listen, because while doing so I could gaze upon her face to my heart's content.

Something that I had said, in reply to a remark of his upon the singing of the *Ave*, caused him to ask, "Ah, you understand music? You are a musician—yes?"

"I play the violin," I answered.

"Do you hear, Veronika?" he cried. "Our friend plays the violin! My dear sir, you must do us the favor of playing for us before we part. Do not be surprised—pay no heed to the formalities. Is not music a free-masonry? Come, you shall try your skill upon an Amati. Such an evening as this must have an appropriate ending. Come."

Without allowing me time to protest, had I been disposed to do so, he grasped my arm and started off. He kept on talking as we marched along. I had no attention for what he said. My mind was divided between delight at my good-fortune, and query as to what its upshot would be. We had not far to go. A few doors to the west of First avenue he turned up a stoop. It was a modest apartment-house. We climbed to the topmost story and stood still in the dark while he fumbled for a match. Then he lighted the gas and said, "Sit down."

The room was bare and cheerless. A chromo or two sufficed to decorate the walls. The furniture—a few chairs and a center-table—was stiff and shabby. The carpet was threadbare.

But a piano occupied a corner; and the floor, the table, and the chairs were littered thick with music. So I felt at home. As I look back at that meager little parlor now, it is transformed into a sanctuary. There the deepest moments of two lives were spent. Yet to-day strangers dwell in it; come and go, laugh and chatter, eat, drink, and make merry between its walls, all unconcernedly, never pausing to bestow a thought upon the sad, sweet lady whose presence once hallowed the place, whose tears more than once watered the floor over which they tread with indifferent footsteps.

The old man lighted the gas and said, "Sit down," making obedience possible by clearing a chair of the music it held. Then scrutinizing my face: "You are a Jew, are you not?" he inquired, in his quick, nervous way.

"Yes," I said, "by birth."

"And by faith?"

"Well, I am not orthodox, not a zealot."

"Your name?"

"Neuman—Ernest Neuman."

"And mine, Tikulski—Baruch. You see we are of one race—*the* race—the chosen race!

Neither am I orthodox. I keep *Yom Kippur*, to be sure, but I have no conscientious scruples against shell-fish, and indeed the 'succulent oyster' is especially congenial to my palate. This," with a wave of the hand toward Veronika, "this is my niece, Miss Pathzuol—P-a-t-h-z-u-o-l — pronounced Patchuol — Hungarian name. Her mother was my sister."

Veronika dropped a courtesy. Her eyes seemed to plead, "Do not laugh at my uncle. He is eccentric; but be charitable."

"Now, Veronika, show Mr. Neuman your music and find something that you can play together. I will go fetch the violin."

The old man left the room.

"What will you play?" asked Veronika. Her voice quavered. She was timid, as indeed it was natural she should be.

"I don't know," I said, my own voice not as firm as I could have wished. "What have you got?"

We commenced at the top of a big pile of music and had settled upon the prize song from the Meistersinger—not then as hackneyed as it is at present, not then the victim of every pas-

sable amateur—when Mr. Tikulski came back. It was in truth an Amati that he brought. The discolored, half obliterated label within said so —but the label might have lied. The strong, tense, ringing tone that it emitted in response to the *A* which Veronika gave me said so also— and that did not lie. I played as best I could. Rather, the music played itself. With a violin under my chin, I lapse into semi-consciousness, lose my identity. Another spirit impels my arm, pouring itself out through the voice of my instrument. Not until silence is restored do I realize that I have been the performer. While the music is going on my personality is annihilated. With the final note I seem to "come to," as one does from a trance.

When I came to this time it was to be embraced by my host with an effusiveness that overwhelmed me. "Ah, you are a true musician," he cried, releasing me from his arms. "You have the inspiration. Veronika, speak, tell him how nobly he has played."

"I can't speak, I can't tell him," answered Veronika, "it has taken away all power of speech." But she gave me a glance, allowed

her eyes to stay with mine for a long moment. A fire had been smoldering in my breast from the first; at these words, at this glance, it burst into flame. A great light inundated my soul. I felt the arteries tingling to my very finger tips. I started tuning up, to hide my emotion. Then we played the march from Raff's Lenore.

I am afraid my agitation marred the effect of Raff's dramatic composition. At any rate, the plaudits were faint when I had done. After a breathing spell Mr. Tikulski told Veronika to sing. She played her own accompaniment while I stood by to turn.

It would be useless for me to try to qualify her singing. Whatever critical faculty I had was stricken dumb. I can only say that she sang a song in French (an old, old romance, till then unfamiliar to me; so old that the composer's name has been forgotten) in a splendid contralto voice, and that it seemed as if she was playing upon the inmost tissue of my life, so keenly I felt each note. I quite forgot to turn the page at the proper place, and Veronika had to prompt me. It was a little thing, and yet I remember as vividly as if from

yesterday the nod of the head and the inflection with which she said, "Turn, please."

"'*Le temps fait passer l'amour*,'" repeated Mr. Tikulski: it was the last line of the song. "Veronika, bring some wine. *Le vin fait passer le temps*," and he chuckled at his joke. Another small thing that I remember vividly is how Tikulski, as she left the room, posed his forefinger upon his Adam's-apple and said, "She carries a 'cello here."

He went on to this effect:—Veronika, as I already knew, was his niece. He also was a violinist: more than that, he was a composer, though as yet unpublished. With the self-conceit too characteristic of musical people, he told me how he was engaged upon "an epoch-making symphony"—had been engaged upon it for the last dozen years, would be engaged upon it for the dozen years to come. Then the world should have it, and he, not having lived in vain, would die content. Veronika was now one-and-twenty. During her childhood he had played in an orchestra and arranged dance-music and done other hack-work to earn money for her maintenance and

education. She had received the best musical training, instrumental and vocal, that could be had in New York. Now he had turned the tables. Now he did nothing but compose—reserved all his time and strength for his masterpiece. Veronika had become the bread-winner. She taught on an average seven hours a day. She sang regularly in church and synagogue, and at concerts and musicals whenever she got a chance.—Veronika reëntered the room bearing cakes and wine. She sat down near to us, and I forgot every thing in the contemplation of her beautiful, sad, strange face. Her eyes were bottomless. Far, far in their liquid depths the spirit shone like a star. All the history of Israel was in her glance.

Every touch of constraint had vanished from her bearing. She spoke with me as with one whom she knew well. I could scarcely believe that only an hour ago we had been ignorant of each other's existence. We discussed music and found that our tastes were in accord. We compared notes on teaching and exchanged anecdotes about our respective pupils. She said among other things that more than half

the money she earned her uncle sent to Germany for the relief of his widowed sister and her offspring, who were extremely poor! Her every syllable clove my heart like an arrow. I grew hot with indignation to think of this frail, delicate maiden slaving her life away in order that her relations might fatten in idleness and her fanatic of an uncle work at his impossible symphony. My fists clenched convulsively as I fancied her exposed to the ups and downs, the hardships, the humiliations, of a music-teacher's career. I took no pains to regulate my manner: and, if she had possessed the least trace of sophistication, she would have guessed that I loved her from every modulation of my voice. Love her I did. I had already loved her for an eternity—from the moment my eyes had first encountered hers in the moonlight by the terrace.—But it was getting late. It would not do for me to wear my welcome out.

"Nay, stay," interposed Mr. Tikulski, "you have not heard *me* play yet."

"Oh, yes, you must hear my uncle play," said Veronika. "The *Adagio* of Händel?" she asked of him.

"No, child," he answered, with a tinge of impatience, "the minuet—from my own symphony," aiming the last words at me.

Veronika returned to the piano. They began.

Indeed, the old man played superbly. His selection was a marvelous finger-exercise—but of true music it contained none save that which he informed it with by the fervor of his performance. He was a perfect executant. His tone was equal to Wilhelmj's. It was a pity, a great pity, that he should fritter himself away in the endeavor to compose. Veronika and I said as much as this to each other with our eyes when finally his bow had reached a standstill.

"Well, if you will insist on going," he said, "you must at least agree to come as soon as possible again. This is Wednesday. We are always at home on Wednesday evening. The other nights of the week Veronika is engaged: Monday and Tuesday, lessons; Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, rehearsals and services at church and synagogue. The church is in Hoboken: she doesn't get home till eleven

o'clock. So on Wednesday we will see you without fail—yes?"

As I looked forward, Wednesday seemed a million years away. "What an old brute you are to make that child track over to Hoboken two nights a week!" I thought; and said, "Thank you. You are very kind. Good-by."

Veronika gave me her hand. The long slim fingers clasped mine cordially and sent an electric thrill into my heart.

II.

I SUPPOSE it is needless to say that I passed a sleepless night, haunted till morning by Veronika's face and voice; that I tossed endlessly from pillow to pillow, going over in memory every circumstance from our meeting to our parting; that I built a hundred wondrous castles in the air and that Veronika presided as chatelaine in each. I thought I should boil over with rage when I dwelt upon the enforced drudgery of her life. I could hardly contain myself for sheer joy when I made bold to say, "Why, it is not impossible that some day she may love you—not impossible that some day she may consent to become your wife." One doubt, the inevitable one, harassed me: Had I a clear field? Was there perchance another suitor there before me? Perhaps her affections were already spoken. Still, on the whole, probably not. For, where had he kept himself during the evening? Surely, if he had existed

at all, he would have been at her side. Yet on the other hand she was so beautiful, it could scarcely be believed that she had attained the age of one-and-twenty without taking some heart captive. And that sad, mysterious expression in her eyes—how had it come about except through love?—Thus between despair and hope I swung, pendulum-like, all night.

Dawn filtered through the window. "Thursday!" I muttered. "Seven days still to be dragged through—but then!"—Imagination faltered at the prospect. I went about my usual business in a sort of intoxication. My footstep had acquired an unwonted briskness. Every five minutes my heart jumped into my throat and lost a beat. But my pupils suffered. I was more inclined to absent-mindedness than ever. At dusk I revisited the terrace despite the rain that fell in torrents, and walked by her house and lived through the whole happy episode again.

Be assured I was punctual when at last Wednesday came. I remember, as I mounted the staircase that led to their abode, an absurd fear beset me. What if they had moved away?

What if I should not find her after this interminable week of waiting? My hand shook as I pulled the bell-knob. I was nerving myself for the worst in the interval that elapsed before the door was opened.—The door was opened by Veronika herself!

"Ah, good-evening. We were expecting you," she said.

I stammered a response. My temples were throbbing madly.

Veronika led me into the dining-room. They were still at table. I began to apologize. Tikulski stopped me.

"You have come just at the proper moment," he cried. "You shall now have occasion to confess that my niece is as good a cook as she is a player."

"But I have dined," I protested.

"But you can make room for one morsel more—for a mere taste of pudding."

Veronika, with infinite grace, was moving about the room, getting a plate and napkin. Then with her own hands she helped me to the pudding.

"Doesn't that flavor do her credit?" cried

Tikulski. "It is a melody materialized, is it not?"

We all laughed; and I ate my pudding at perfect ease.

"I hope Mr. Neuman has brought his violin," said Veronika, "for then we can have a first and second."

"Yes, I took that liberty," I answered.

And afterward, adjourning to the parlor, I played second to the old man's first for an hour or more—reading at sight from his own manuscript music, which was not the lightest of tasks. Then Veronika sang to us. And then, as it was extremely hot, Mr. Tikulski proposed that we betake ourselves to a concert garden in the neighborhood and spend the rest of the evening in the open air. We sat at a round table under an ailanthus tree, and watched the people come and go, and listened to light tunes discoursed by a tolerable band, and by and by had a delicious little supper; and while Mr. Tikulski puffed a huge cigar, Veronika and I enjoyed a long, delightful confidential talk in which our minds got wonderfully close together, and during which one scrap of information dropped

from her lips that afforded me infinite relief. Speaking of her nocturnal pilgrimages to Hoboken, she said, "I go over by myself in the summer because it is still light; but coming home, the organist takes me to the ferry, where uncle meets me."

"So," I concluded, "there is no one ahead of me; for if there were, of course he would be her escort." And I lost no time about putting in a word for myself. "I am very anxious to hear you sing in church," I said. "Your voice can not attain its full effect between the narrow walls of a parlor."

And it was agreed that I should call upon them Sunday afternoon and that we should all three take a walk in Central Park, Veronika and I afterward going to Hoboken together. Music had, indeed, proved a freemasonry, so far as we were concerned. This was only our second interview; and already we treated each other like old and intimate friends.

A thunder shower broke above our heads on the way back to Fifty-first street, and in default of an umbrella, I lent Veronika my handkerchief to protect her hat. She returned

it to me at the door of her house, and lo! it was freighted with a faint, sweet perfume that it had caught from contact with her. I stowed the handkerchief religiously in my pocket, and for a week afterward it still retained a trace of the same dainty odor. It was a touchstone, by means of which I could call her up bodily before me whenever I desired.

As I sat alone in my bed-chamber that night, I acknowledged that I was more deeply in love than ever. The reader would not wonder at this if he could form a true conception of Veronika's presence. I wish I could describe her—that is, render in words the impression wrought upon me by her face, and her voice, and her manner, and the things she said. I am not accustomed to expressing such matters in words, but with my violin I should have no sort of difficulty. If I wanted to give utterance to my idea of Veronika, all I should have to do would be to take my violin and play this heavenly melody from Chopin's Impromptu in C-sharp minor:—

It seems almost as though Chopin must have had Veronika in mind when he composed it. Its color, its passion, its vague dreamy sadness, and withal its transparent simplicity, make it for me a perfect musical portrait. Those were the traits which most constantly and conspicuously abode in my thought of her. Her simplicity, her child-like simplicity, and her naturalness, and

the serene purity of her soul, made her as different from other women that I had seen—though, to be sure, I had seen but few women except as I passed them in the street or rode with them in the horse-car—made her as different from those I had seen, at any rate, as a lily plucked on the hillside is different from a hothouse flower, as daylight is different from gaslight, as Schubert's music is different from Liszt's. In every thing and from every point of view, she was simple and natural and serene. Her great pale face, and the dark eyes, and the smile that came and went like a melody across her lips, and the way she wore her hair, and the way she dressed, and the way she played, sang, spoke, and her gestures, and the low, sad, musical laughter that I heard only once or twice from the beginning to the end—all were simple, and natural, and serene. And yet there was a mystery attaching to each of them, a something beyond my comprehension, a something that tinged my love for her with awe. A mystery that would neither be defined nor penetrated nor ignored, brooded over her, as the perfume broods over a rose. I doubt

whether an American woman can be like this unless she is older and has had certain experiences of her own. Veronika had not had sufficient experience of her own to account for what I have described: but she was a Jewess, and all the experience of the Jewish race, all the martyrdom of the scattered hosts, were hers by inheritance.

No matter how I was occupied, whether teaching, or practicing, or reading, or writing, or walking, or talking to other people, I was always conscious of the love of Veronika astir in my heart. Just as through all the vicissitudes of a fugue the subject melody will survive in one form or another and be at no minute altogether silenced, so through all the changes of my busy day the thought of Veronika lingered in my mind. I can not tell how completely the whole aspect of the world had been altered since the night I first saw her standing in the moonlight. It was as if my life up to that moment had been passed beneath gray skies, and suddenly the clouds had dispersed and the sunshine flooded the earth. A myriad things became plain and clear that had been

invisible until now, and old things acquired a new significance. My heart welled with tenderness for all living creatures—the overflow of the tenderness it had for her. All my senses, all my capacities for pain and pleasure, were more acute than before. Suddenly music, which had been my art, became my religion: she had glorified it by her devotion. I looked forward to my next visit with her as a benighted traveler looks forward to the glowing window that promises rest and shelter: only in my case the light illuminated my whole pathway and made the progress toward its source a constant delight instead of a perfunctory labor. But this is the common story of a man in love, and stands without telling. Suffice it that before our acquaintance was a month old I had got upon the most intimate terms with Mr. Tikulski and Veronika, spending not only every Wednesday evening at their house but also each Sunday afternoon, and accompanying her to Hoboken as regularly as she had to go. Never was there a prouder man than I at those junctures when, with her hand pressed tightly under my arm, I felt that she was trusting herself entirely to my charge

and that I was answerable for her safety and well-being. The Hoboken ferry-boats became to my thinking vastly more interesting than the most romantic of Venetian gondolas; and to this day I can not sniff the peculiar stuffy odor that always pervades a ferry-boat cabin without being transported back across the years to that happy, happy time. I actually blessed the necessity that forced her to journey so far for her livelihood; and it was with an emphatic pang that I listened to the plans which she and Tikulski were prone to discuss whereby she was shortly to get an engagement nearer home: though the sight of her pale, tired cheek reproached me the moment after. On her side she made no concealment of a most cordial regard for me. Her face always lighted up at my arrival; she was always eager to share her ideas with me and to call forth my opinion of her work, appearing pleased by my praise and impressed by my criticism. She set me an admirable example of frankness. She would say precisely what she thought of my rendi tions, sparing not their blemishes and indicating how an effective point might be improved.

But as yet I had not dared to hope that she loved, or was even in train to love me. So as yet I had not intended to speak of love at all.

But one day—one Sunday late in June—she proposed to sing me a song she had just been learning.

"What is it?" I asked.

"From *Le Désert* of Felicien David," she said, handing me the music.

It was the "*O, belle nuit, O, sois plus lente,*" originally written for tenor.

"I should hardly think it would suit your voice," I said, running over the music.

"Neither did I, at first; but listen, any way." And she began.

Her voice had never been in better order, had never been more resonant, never more electric. Contrary to my misgivings, the song suited it perfectly, afforded its 'cello quality full scope. She sang with an enthusiasm, a precision, a delicacy of shading, that carried me away. As the last tender note melted on her lips, she swung around on the piano-stool and looked a question with her great, dark, serious

eyes. I know not what possessed me. A blindness fell upon my sight. My heart gave a mighty bound. In another instant I was at her side and had caught her—my darling—in my arms. In another instant she was sobbing her life out upon my shoulder.

By and by, after the first stress of our emotion had subsided, I mustered voice to say, "Then, Veronika, you love me?"

Her hand nestled in mine by way of answer.

I told her as well I could how I had loved her from the first.

"It is strange," she said, "when you turned to me there on the terrace and spoke, it was as if a light broke into my life. And it has been the same ever since—my heart has been full of light. Oh, I have wanted you so much! I was afraid you did not care for me. Why have you waited so long?"

No need of putting down my answer nor the rest of our dialogue. When Mr. Tikulski came back I confessed every thing. He asked but a single question, imposed but a single condition. I replied that I earned enough by my teaching to support him and her comfortably and to

contribute toward the maintenance of the widow and her brood in Germany. Furthermore, I had solid grounds for expecting to earn more next winter. There would be an opening for me in the Symphony and Philharmonic Societies, and as I was gaining something of a reputation I might reasonably demand a higher price for my lessons. It was arranged that we should be married the first week in August.

Our journey to Hoboken was all too short that night. Never had horse-car or ferry-boat advanced with such velocity before. As we left the church she asked, "Did you notice how my voice trembled in my solo?"

"It only added to its effect," I answered. "Were you nervous?"

"Oh, no, I was happy, so happy that I could not control my voice."

Ah, but I had a full heart as I walked home that night. The future was all radiant—radiant beyond my wildest dream. It frightened me. Such perfect bliss seemed scarcely possible, seemed too great and glorious to last. And yet had not Veronika's own lips promised

it? and sealed the promise with a kiss that burned still where she had placed it? It was useless for me to go to bed; it was useless for me to stay in the house. I put on my hat and went out and spent the night pacing up and down before her door. And as soon as the morning was far enough advanced I rang the bell and invited myself to breakfast with her; and after breakfast I helped her to wash the dishes, to Mr. Tikulski's unutterable disapproval—it was "unteeknified," he said—and after that I accompanied her as far as the first house where she had to give a lesson.

While writing the above I had almost forgotten. Now I remember. I must stop for a space to get used to remembering again that she is dead.

III.

YES, she is dead. That is the truth. If truth is good, as men proclaim it to be, then goodness is intrinsically cruel. That Veronika is dead is the truth which lies like a hot coal upon my consciousness, and goads me along as I tell this tale. And the manner of her death and the speediness of it—I must tell all.

And yet, although I know her to be dead, although I repeat to myself a hundred times a day, "She is dead, dead, dead," and although, God help me, I think I realize too well that she is dead, yet to this day I can scarcely bring myself to believe it. Truth as it is, it seems to be in utter contradiction to the rest of truth. Even those who have abandoned faith in Religion, still profess faith in Nature, saying, "Nature is provident, beneficent, and wise; Nature is alive with beauty." And at most times, it seems as if these assertions were not to be contested. Yet,

how can they be true when Nature contained the possibility of Veronika's death? How can Nature be wise, and yet have permitted that maiden life to be destroyed?—provident, and yet have flung away her finest product?—beneficent, and yet have torn bleeding from my life all that made my life worth living?—beautiful, and yet have quenched the beautifying light of Veronika's presence, and hushed the voice that made the world musical? The mere fact that Veronika could die gives the lie to the Nature-worshipers. In the light of that fact, or rather in the darkness of it, it is mockery to sing songs of praise to Nature.—That is why it is so hard for me to believe—to believe a thing which annihilates the harmony of the universe, and proclaims the optimism of the philosophers to be a delusion, a superstition. How could I believe my senses if I should hear Christine Nilsson utter a hideous false note? So is it hard for me to believe that Nature has allowed Veronika to die. And yet it is the truth, the unmistakable, irrevocable, relentless truth.

I suppose all lovers are happy: but it does not seem possible that other lovers can ever

have had such unmitigated happiness as ours was—happiness so keen as almost to be a pain. The light of love that burst suddenly into our lives, and filled each cranny full to overflowing, was so pure and bright as almost to blind us. The happiness was all the keener, the light all the brighter, because of the hardship and the monotony of our daily tasks. If we had been rich, if we had had leisure and friends and many resources for diversion, then most likely our delight in each other would not have been so great. But as we were—poor, hard worked, and alone in the world—we found all the happiness we had, in ourselves, in communing together; and happiness concentrated, was proportionately more intense. The few hours in the week which we were permitted to spend side by side glittered like diamonds against the dull background of the rest. And we improved them to the full. We called upon each fleeting moment to stay and perpetuate itself; and we could not understand how Faust had had to wait so many years before he could do the same. The season was divine, clear skies and balmy weather day after day, and the Park

being easily accessible, we could imagine ourselves among the green fields of the country whenever the fancy seized us. I believe that as a matter of fact the turf of the common was sadly parched and brown ; but we were not critical so long as we could wander over it hand in hand. Then, our characters were perfectly accorded ; their unison was faultless. Each called for the other, needed the other, as the dominant chord calls for and needs its tonic. We had not a hope, a fear, an ambition, an aspiration, but it was shared equally between us. Our art was a mutual passion which we pursued together. When Veronika was seated at the piano and I stood at her side with my violin at my shoulder, our cup of contentment was full to the brim. Nothing more was wanting. I remember, one evening, in the middle of a phrase, her fingers faltered and she wheeled around and lifted her eyes upon my face.— " What is the matter, darling ?" I asked.— " I only want to look at you to realize that it isn't a dream," she answered.—And yet she is dead.

June and half July had wound away ; in little

more than a fortnight our wedding would be celebrated. The night was sultry, and she and I sat together by an open window. Her uncle was absent: an idea had come to him just before dinner, she explained, and according to his custom he had gone out to walk the streets until he had mastered it. We were by no means sorry to be alone. We had plenty to talk about; but even without talking it was marvelously pleasant to sit together and think the happy thoughts that filled our minds and listen to the subdued sounds of human life that came in by the window.

Veronika had shown me some of her bridal outfit, telling how she had worked at it in her short snatches of leisure. We took as much pleasure in the contemplation of this modest little trousseau as though it had boasted all the rubies and silken fabrics of the Indies. This set us to talking of the future and making plans. And afterward we talked of the past. We spoke of how strange it was that we should have come together in the way we had—by the merest accident, as it seemed; and we doubted if it was indeed an accident,

if destiny had not purposely guided our footsteps that memorable night.—"Why," she exclaimed, "if uncle and I had been but a few moments earlier or later, we never should have seen each other at all. Think of the terrible risk we ran! Think if we had never known each other!" and her fingers tightened around mine.

"And then," I went on, "that I should have spoken to you, a strange lady, and that you should have answered!"

"It seemed perfectly natural for me to answer; I had done so before I stopped to think. But afterward I was ashamed; I was afraid you might think it indelicate. But, somehow, the words spoke themselves. I am glad of it now."

"I do believe God's hand was in it! I do believe it was all pre-ordained in heaven. I believe that our Guardian Angel prompted me to speak and you to answer. It can't be that we, who were made for each other, were left to find it out by a mere perilous chance—it isn't credible."

"But nobody except myself—not even you, can understand how like a miracle it all is to me,

because nobody else can know how much I needed you. Nobody else can know how dreary and empty my life was before you came, or how completely you have filled it and gladdened it."

Here we stopped talking for a while.

By and by she resumed, "I think that music differs from the other arts. I think the musician instinctively needs a companion worker. I know that in the old days when I would play or sing, my heart seemed to cry out continually for some one to come and share its feeling. Perhaps this was because music is the most emotional of the arts, the most sympathetic. Really, sometimes I could not bear to touch the piano, the pain of being alone was so acute. Of course I had my uncle, a most thorough musician; but I wanted somebody who would feel precisely as I did, and he did not. He always analyzed and criticised, never allowed himself to be carried away, never forgot the intellectual side of the things I would play. But now—now that you are with me, my music is a constant source of joy. And then, the thought that we are going to work together all our lives, the

thought of the music we are going to make together—oh, it is too great, it takes my breath away! I don't dare to believe it. I am afraid all the time that something will happen to prevent it coming true."

Again for a while we did not speak.

Again by and by she resumed, "And then you can not know how lonely I was in other ways, how I longed for a little affection, a little tenderness. Of course uncle is very good, has always been very good to me; but do you think it was ungrateful for me to want a little more affection than he gave me? I mean a little more *manifest* affection; because I know that in the bottom of his heart he loves me very warmly. But I longed for somebody to *show* a little care for me, and uncle is very undemonstrative—he is so absorbed in his symphony, and then sometimes he is exceedingly severe. When I would get home at night it was so dreary not to have any one to speak to about the trials of the day—not to have any one who would sympathize and understand. You see, other girls have their mothers or their brothers and sisters and friends: but I had

nobody except my uncle ; and he was so much older, and regarded things so differently, that I do not think it was unnatural for me to wish for some one else. Besides, I had so much responsibility ; I felt so weak and helpless. I thought, what if something should happen to my uncle! or what if I should get sick and be unable to teach! Oh, the rest and security that you brought to me!"

What I replied—a mass of broken sentences —was too incoherent to bear recording.

"And then, the mere physical fatigue—day after day, work, work, work, and never any respite. Of course, every body has to work, but almost every body has a holiday now and then ; and I never had a single day that I could call all my own. In winter it was hardest. No matter how tired I was, I had to be up and off giving lessons even if the snow was ankle deep. And the ice in the river made it such hard work getting to Hoboken, made the journey so very long. I had to do the housework too, you know. We couldn't afford to keep a servant, on account of the money we had to send abroad. When I would come home all fagged

out I had to clean the rooms and cook the dinner; though I am afraid that sometimes I did not more than half do my duty. Sometimes I would let the dust lie for a week on the mantle-piece. And every day was just the same as the day that had gone before. It was like traveling in a circle. When I would go to bed at night my weariness would be all the harder because of the thought, 'To-morrow will be just the same, the same round of lessons, the same dead fatigue, the same monotonous drudgery from beginning to end.' And as I saw no promise of change, as I thought it would be the same all my life, I could not help asking what the use was of having been born. Wasn't I a dreadful grumbler? Yet, what could I do? I think it is natural when one is young to long for something to look forward to, for just a little pleasure and just a little companionship. But then you came, and every thing was altered. Do you remember in the Creation the wonderful awakening one feels when they sing, 'And the Lord said, Let there be light,' very low, and then with a mighty burst of sound, 'And there was LIGHT?' Do you remember

how one's heart leaps and seems to grow big in one's breast? It was like that when you came to me. I used to wonder why I had ever felt unhappy or discontented. The mere prospect of seeing you at the week's end made my heart sing from morning to night. It gave a motive, an object, to my life—made me feel that I was working to a purpose, that I should have my reward. I had been growing hard and indifferent, even indifferent to music. But now I began to love my music more than ever: and no matter how tired I might be, when I had a moment of leisure I would sit down and practice so as to be able to play well for you. Music seemed to express all the unutterable feeling that you inspired me with. One day I had sung the *Ave Maria* of Cherubini to you, and you said, 'It is so religious—it expresses precisely the emotions one experiences in a church.' But for me it expressed rather the emotions a woman has when she is in the presence of the man she loves. All the time I had no idea that you would ever feel in the same way toward me."

My kisses silenced her. Afterward she sang

from Pergolese's *Stabat Mater*, and played a medley of bits from Chopin: until, looking at my watch, I saw it was nearing midnight. Time for me to go away. But her uncle had not yet come home. I did not like to leave her alone. I said so.

"Oh, that is nothing," she explained. "It always happens when he has one of his ideas. Very likely he won't come in till morning. I am quite accustomed to it, and not a bit afraid."

"In that event," I thought, "I certainly ought to go. It may embarrass her, my staying so late; and besides, she needs the sleep."

I started to say good-by. Our parting was hard. Again and again, as I reached the door, I turned back and began anew. But at last I found myself in the street. I looked up at the parlor window, and remained on the curbstone until I saw her close the sash and pull the shade, and the light being extinguished, knew that she had gone to her bedroom. Then I set my face toward home.

I had never loved her as I loved her now. Every lover will understand that what she had said during the evening had added fuel to the

fire. My tenderness for her had increased a hundredfold. All my life should be dedicated to soothing her and protecting her and making her glad. The tired child should find rest and peace in my arms. To think of how she had been exposed to the noise and the heat and the glare of the fierce work-a-day world! Ah, Veronika, Veronika, I wanted, late as it was, to return and pour out the yearning of my spirit at your feet. Why had I left her at all? Each heart-beat seemed to speak her name. And when the knowledge that in a fortnight we were really going to be married, that I was really going to have the right to be to her what I wished—when that knowledge flashed in upon me, I had to turn away lest it should overwhelm me. I could not contemplate it any more than I could have gazed straight upon the sun.—Finally I fell asleep and dreamed that I was seated at her side, caressing her brow and emptying my life into her eyes.

I awoke next morning with a start. My first sensation was one of anxiety and unrest. As I dressed, this feeling intensified. I had a pre-

sentiment that something had gone wrong. I tried to reason it away. The more I reasoned, the stronger it waxed. I wanted to see her and satisfy myself that every thing was right. It was eight o'clock. She would leave for her lessons in half an hour. Luckily to-day my own engagements did not begin till ten. If I hurried, I should be in time to catch her. I put on my hat and walked at top-speed toward Fifty-first street.

Arrived at the door of the apartment-house, my worry subsided as abruptly and with as little provocation as it had sprung up. Indeed, I laughed as I remembered it. "Of course," I said, "nothing is the matter. Still I am not sorry to have come."

"Has Miss Pathzuol gone out yet?" I asked the janitress who let me in.

"I have not seen her," she answered. "But she may have done so without my noticing."

I ran up the stairs and rang Veronika's bell.—No response.—I rang again.—Again no response.—A third ring, with waning hope of success: and, "So," I thought, "I am too late."

Disappointed, I was retracing my steps down

the staircase. I stood aside to let some one pass.

"Ah, how do you do?" exclaimed Mr. Tikulski. "What brings you out so early?"

I explained.

"Never mind," he said, "but come back with me and have a cup of coffee. I have been out all night, struggling with an obstinate little aria. I will play it for you."

He unlocked the door. The parlor was dark. The shades had not yet been drawn. As he sent them flying up with a screech, my heart sank. Every thing was just as we had left it last night; but it was cheerless and empty with her away. There lay the Chopin still open on the music rest. There were our two chairs still close together as we had placed them.

Tikulski went after the coffee apparatus; presently returned, arranged it on the table, and applied a match to the lamp.

"While we wait for the water to boil," he said, "I will give you the result of my night's labor. I composed it walking up and down under the trees in the park, so that they—the trees—might claim it for their fruit! Ha-ha! A heav-

enly night: the sky could scarcely hold the stars, there were so many; but terribly warm."

Again he went away—to fetch his instrument.

He was gone a long while. The water began to boil—boiled loudly and more loudly. A dense stream of vapor gushed from the nozzle of the pot. Still he remained.

At last I lost patience. Stepping to the threshold, I called his name. At first he did not answer.

"Mr. Tikulski!" I repeated.

I seemed to hear—no, certainly did hear—his voice, low, inarticulate, down at the other end of the hallway. It alarmed me. Had he met with an accident? hurt himself? fainted after the night's vigil? paralysis? apoplexy? I hastened toward him, entered the room whence his voice had sounded. There he stood. He stood in the center of the floor, immobile as a statue, his face livid, his attitude that of a man who has seen a ghost.

"For God's sake, what has happened?" I cried.

He appeared not to hear. I repeated my question.

He roused himself. A tremor swept over him. A painful rattling was audible in his throat. He raised his arm heavily and pointed. "L-look," he gasped.

I looked. How can I tell what I saw?

IV.

AND yet I must tell it, though the telling consume me like a flame.

I saw a bed and Veronika lying on it, face downward. She was dressed in her customary black gown. I supposed she was asleep. I supposed she was asleep, for one short moment. That was the last moment of my life. For then the truth burst upon me, fell upon me like a shaft from out the skies and hurled me into hell. I saw—not that she was dead only. If she had only died it would be different. I saw —merciful God!—I saw that she was murdered.

Oh, of course I would not, could not, believe it. Of course it was a dream, a nightmare, an hallucination, from which I should presently awake. Of course the thing was impossible, could not be. Of course I flung myself upon the bed at her side and crushed her between my arms and covered her with kisses and called and cried to her to move, to speak, to come

back to life. And although her hands were icy cold and her body rigid and her face as white as marble, and although—ah, no! I may leave out the horrible detail—still I could not believe. I could not believe—yet how could I deny? There she lay, my sweetheart, my promised bride, deaf to my voice, blind to my presence, unmoved by my despair, beyond the reach of my strongest love, never to care for me again—Veronika, my tender, sad Veronika—oh, she lay there, dead, murdered! And still, with the knife-hilt staring at me like the face of Satan, still I could not believe. It was the fact, the unalterable fact, the fact that extinguished the light of the sun and stars and flooded the universe with blackness: and still, in spite of it, I called to her and crushed her in my embrace and kissed her and caressed her and was sure it could not be true. And meantime people came and filled the room.

I did not see the people. Only in a vague way I knew that they were there, heard the murmur of their voices, as if they were a long distance off. I had no senses left. I could neither see nor hear distinctly. My eyes were

burned by a fierce red fire. My ears were full of the uproar of a thousand devils. But I knew that people had intruded upon us. I knew that I hated them because they would not leave us two alone. I remember I rose and faced them and cursed them and told them to be gone. And then I took her in my arms again and pressed her hard to me and forgot every thing but that she would not answer.

Gradually, however, nature was coming to my rescue. Gradually I seemed to be sinking into a stupor—had no sensation left except a numb, bruised feeling from head to foot—forgot what the matter was, forgot even Veronika, simply existed in a state of half conscious wretchedness. The first frenzy of grief had spent itself. The very immensity of the pain I had suffered acted as an opiate, exhausted and rendered me insensible. I heard the voices of the people as a soldier who is wounded may still hear something of the din of battle.

I don't know how long I had lain thus when I became aware that a hand was placed upon my shoulder. Some one shook me roughly and said, "Get up and come away." Passively, I

obeyed. "Sit down," said the same person, pushing me into a chair. I sat down and relapsed into my stupor.

Again I don't know how long it was before they disturbed me for a second time. Two or three men were standing in front of me. One of them was in uniform. Slowly I recognized that he was an officer, a captain of police. He spoke. I heard what he said without understanding, as one who is half asleep hears what is said at his bedside. This much only I gathered, that he wanted me to go with him somewhere. I was too much dazed to care what I did or what was done with me. He took my arm and led me away. He led me into the street. There was a a great crowd. I shut my eyes and tottered along at his side. We entered a house. Somebody asked me a lot of questions—my name and where I lived and so forth—to which my lips framed mechanical answers. I can remember nothing more.

When consciousness revived I was made to understand that I had fainted.

"But where am I? What has happened?" I asked, trying to remember.

The police-captain explained. "Mr. Neuman," he said, "I have made all the inquiry that is as yet possible, and the result is that I deem it my duty to take you in custody. I prefer no charge, but I believe I am bound to hold you for the inquest. The hour of your leaving her last night, the time that Miss Pathzuol has apparently been dead, and the fact that you were the last person known to have been in her company, make it incumbent upon me to place you under arrest."

I pondered his words. Every thing came back. I was accused, or at least suspected, of having murdered Veronika—*I!*

I felt no emotion. I was stunned as yet, like a man who has received a blow between the eyes. My brain had turned to stone. I repeated over to myself all that the captain had said. The words wrought no effect. I did not even experience pain as I thought of her. She is dead? I queried. They were three vapid syllables. My senses I had recovered—I could see and hear plainly now—could remember the events of the morning in detail and in their correct order. But somehow I had lost all capacity for feeling.

V.

AND so it continued throughout the inquest and throughout the trial—for, yes, they tried me for my sweetheart's murder. I ate, drank, slept, and answered the questions that were put to me, all in a dazed, dull way, but suffered no pain, no surprise, no indignation, had no more sensation than a dead man. That Veronika had been killed, and that I was accused of having killed her, were the facts which I heard told and told again from morning till night each day; yet I had not the least conception of what they signified. I was too stunned and benumbed to realize.

The first day passed by, and the second and the third, every one of them busy with events that meant life or death for me: yet I took no notice. When left to myself, invariably I closed my eyes, and the stupor settled over my senses like a cloud of smoke. When aroused, I did whatever was required as passively as an automaton. I remember those first few days

as one remembers a hateful dream. I remember being driven in a dark, noisy vehicle from the station-house to the city prison, and having in the latter place a cell assigned to me which was destined to serve as my home for many weeks. I remember making several trips, handcuffed to my custodian, from the jail to the office where the inquest was held and back: but my only recollection of the inquest itself is a confused one—a crowded, foul-smelling room, a chaos of faces and voices, endless talking, endless questioning of myself by men who were strangers to me. I remember that by and by these journeys came to an end: but what the verdict of the inquest was I do not remember—I do not think I troubled myself to ask at the time. Then I remember that after some days spent alone in my cell one of the keepers said, "You are indicted," and inquired whether I wished to communicate with my attorney. Indicted? My attorney? I did not comprehend. I do not remember what I answered.

Once the door of my cell opened, and they brought in a trunk and a violin-case and

placed them on the floor at the foot of my cot. I recognized these for my own property. Mechanically I took out my violin and drew forth one long, clear note. That note was like a sudden flash of light. For a single instant the desolation to which my world had been reduced became visible in all its ghastliness. For a single instant I realized my position, realized that Veronika was dead, and the rest. The truth pierced my consciousness like an arrow and made my body quake with pain. But immediately the darkness settled over me again, the stupor returned.

Slowly, however, this stupor was changing its character. By degrees, so far as my mere thinking faculties were involved, it began to be dissipated. By degrees my mind struggled out of it. I began to notice and to understand things, and was able to converse and to appreciate what was said. But over my feelings it retained its sway. Although I was quite competent now to follow the explanations of my lawyer—how Veronika had been murdered and how and why I was suspected as the murderer—still I had no feeling of any sort about

the matter. I might have been a log of wood.

My lawyer had presented himself one day and volunteered his services. I had accepted them without even inquiring his name.

"Don't you remember me?" he asked.

I looked at his face but could not recall having seen it before.

"My name is Epstein," he said. "We went to school together."

"Oh, yes; I remember," I replied.

Regularly each day he came and reported the progress of affairs.

"They are building up a strong case against you," he said. "Our only hope lies in an alibi."

"What is that?" I inquired dully.

He explained; and continued, "Of course the prosecution won't tell me what tack they mean to pursue, but from several little things that have leaked out I infer that they have a pretty strong case. Now, at what hour did you leave Miss Pathzuol that night?"

"At about midnight."

"And went directly home?"

"Directly home."

"After entering your house did you meet any of the other occupants? any of your fellow-lodgers?"

"I don't remember."

"But you must make an effort to remember. Try."

"I tell you, I don't remember," I repeated. His persistence irritated me.

"You appear to take as little interest in this case as though it were the life of a dog hanging in the scales instead of your own," he said; and that was the truth.

Next day his face wore a somber expression.

"This is too bad," he cried. "I have interviewed your landlady and your fellow-lodgers, and not one of them can swear to your alibi. I know you are innocent, but I don't see how I am to prove it."

At last the trial began.

I sat through that trial, the most indifferent person in the court-room. I heard the testimony of the witnesses and the speeches of the lawyers simply because I was close at hand and could not help it. But I was the least interested of the many auditors, the least curious

as to the result. Yet, stolid, indifferent, inattentive as I was, every detail of the trial is stamped upon my memory in indelible hues. Here is the story of it.

The first day was used in securing a jury.

The second day commenced with an address —an "opening" they called it—by the counsel for the prosecution. He told quietly who Veronika was, how she had lived alone with her uncle, and how on the morning of the 13th July they had found her, murdered. He said that a remarkable train of circumstantial evidence pointed to one man as the murderer. Then he raised his voice and dwelt upon the blackness of that man's soul. Then he faced around and bade the prisoner stand up. Shaking his finger at me, "Gentlemen of the jury," he thundered, "there is the man."

The first witness was Tikulski. He testified to the discovery of the murder in the manner already known; told how he had been absent all night that night; and explained the nature of the relations that subsisted between Veronika and myself.

"When you got home on the morning of the

13th in what condition was the door of your apartment?" asked the district-attorney.

"In its usual condition."

"That is to say, locked?"

"Precisely."

"It had not been broken open or tampered with?"

"Not so far as I could see."

"That's all."

On cross-examination he said that he had never heard a harsh word pass between Veronika and myself, that on the contrary I had given him every reason for considering me a most tender and devoted lover.

"And when made aware of the death of his betrothed," pursued my lawyer, "how did Mr. Neuman conduct himself?"

"He acted like a crazy man—like one paralyzed by a tremendous blow."

"You can go, Mr. Tikulski," said my lawyer.

"But I wish to say," began Tikulski, "that I do not believe——"

"Stop," cried the prosecutor. "Your honor, I object to any expression of opinion by the witness."

"No matter about what you don't believe," said the Judge to Tikulski.

"But——"

"But you must hold your tongue," imperiously. "You can go."

The old man left the stand and elbowed his way to my side.

"What I wished to say was," he whispered into my ear, "that I believe you are as innocent as I myself. It is outrageous, this trial. They compelled me to testify. But you must understand that I am sure of your innocence. I don't know why they hushed me up."

Meanwhile the captain of police had succeeded him, and sworn to having visited the scene of the crime and to having placed the prisoner under arrest.

"Captain," said the district-attorney, "here is a key. Have you seen it before?" handing a key to the witness.

"I have," was the reply.

"Tell us when and where."

"I took it from the prisoner on the morning of his arrest."

"What further can you say about it?"

"Subsequently it was identified as a key to the apartments occupied by the deceased."

"Did you try it yourself?"

"I did. It fitted the lock."

"How is this?" Epstein asked me. "How did you come by that key?"

"I'm sure I don't know," I answered. "I don't remember ever having had it in my possession."

"But it is an ugly circumstance, and must be accounted for."

"Oh, what difference does it make?" I retorted petulantly. "Leave me alone."

"A few little trifles like this may make the difference of your neck," muttered Epstein, and he looked disturbed.

"Captain," continued the district-attorney, "just one thing more. Do you recognize this handkerchief?"

"Yes; it was found in the pocket of the prisoner when he was searched at the station-house."

My lawyer got hold of the handkerchief and exhibited it to me. It was stained dull brown. "This is blood," he said. "How did it happen?"

"I don't know, I haven't an idea," was the utmost I could respond. Epstein looked more uneasy than before.

"That's enough, Captain," said the prosecutor.

"But before you leave the stand," put in Epstein, "kindly tell us what the prisoner's conduct was from the time you took charge of the premises down to the time you locked him up."

"At first he acted as though he was crazy; raved and carried on like a madman. Afterward he became quiet and sort of dull. At the station-house he fainted away."

"Didn't act as though he liked it—as though the death of Miss Pathzuol was a thing that pleased him?"

"No, sir; on the contrary. He acted as though it had been a great shock to him."

"You can go."

Next came a physician.

He said he was a police-surgeon. At about nine o'clock on the morning of July 13th he had been summoned to the house of the decedent; had examined the body and satisfied

himself as to the mode of death. There were three separate knife-wounds. These he proceeded to describe in technical language. Not one of them could have been self-inflicted; any one of them was sufficient to have caused immediate death.

"Dr. Merrill," inquired the prosecutor, "how long—how many hours—prior to your arrival must the crime have been perpetrated?"

"From seven to ten hours."

"So that—?"

"So that the crime must have been perpetrated between eleven and two o'clock."

"Good.—Now, Doctor, here is a handkerchief which the captain says he took from the prisoner on the morning of his arrest. Do you recognize it?"

"I do."

"Go on—what about it?"

"It was submitted to me for chemical analysis—to analyze the substance with which it is discolored."

"And you found?"

"I found that it was stained with blood."

"Human blood?"

"Precisely."

"About how long had it been shed? Did its condition indicate?"

"From its condition when submitted to me—that is, at about noon on the 13th—I inferred that it had been shed not much less nor much more than twelve hours."

"Thank you, Doctor," said the lawyer. To Epstein, "Your witness."

"One moment, Doctor," said Epstein. Turning to me, "You can give no explanation of this circumstance?" he whispered.—"None," I answered.—To the witness, "Doctor, blood may be shed in divers ways, may it not? This blood on the handkerchief, for instance—it might have come from—say, a nose-bleed, eh?"

The surgeon smiled, hesitated, then replied, "Possibly, though not probably. Its quality is rather that of blood from a wound than that of blood from congested capillaries. But it is quite possible."

"You can go, Doctor."—To me, "Are you sure you didn't have a nose-bleed on the night in question?"

"I know nothing at all about it."

The next witness was a woman.

She said she was the janitress of the apartment-house, No. — East Fifty-first street. It was a portion of her duty as such to open the street-door when the bell was rung. On the evening of July 12th, she had opened the door and admitted the prisoner between seven and eight o'clock.

"Can you say at what hour the prisoner left the house?"

"Yes, sir, I can. It was a warm night, and me and my husband were seated out on the stoop for the sake of the breeze till late. Mr. Neuman went out a little before twelve o'clock."

"He entered between seven and eight. He left at about midnight. Now, meanwhile, whom else did you admit?"

"No one at all. From half past seven until midnight no one went in except Mr. Neuman."

"Was not that a somewhat unusual circumstance?"

"Most extraordinary. Me and my husband spoke about it at the time."

"You can swear positively on this score?"

"Yes, because we staid on the stoop the whole evening and not a soul could have passed us without our seeing."

"Are there any other means of ingress to the house of which you have charge than the street door?"

"Yes, sir; the basement-door and the scuttle-door in the roof."

"What was their condition on the night of the 12th of July?"

"They were locked and bolted."

"What was their condition on the morning of the 13th?"

"At six o'clock when I opened the house they were still locked and bolted."

"Meantime could they have been unlocked?"

"No, because I carried the keys in my pocket."

"Now, what are the means of ingress to the flat occupied by Mr. Tikulski?"

"The door that opens from his private hall into the outer hall of the house."

"Any other?"

"No, your honor."

"Do you recognize this key?" handing to the witness the key that the officer had identified.

"I do, sir."

"Well?"

"It's a key to Mr. Tikulski's door?"

Here befell a pause, during which the jurymen shifted in their seats and the prosecutor consulted with his colleague. In a moment he resumed.

"Now, Mrs. Marshall, you have testified that the prisoner at the bar, Ernest Neuman, left the house, No. — East Fifty-first street, shortly before midnight on the 12th of July. Your memory on this point is entirely trustworthy?"

"It is, sir."

"Very well. Did you notice his movements after that?"

"I did, sir."

"Tell us what they were."

"Well, sir, he crossed over the street and stood on the sidewalk under a lamp-post looking up at the front of the house toward Mr. Tikulski's windows, and then—"

"For how long?"

"I couldn't tell exactly, but maybe for the time it would take you to walk around the block."

"For five minutes?"

"Yes, or more likely for ten."

"And then—?"

"Well, and then, as I was saying, he marched straight away toward the avenue."

"Toward what avenue?"

"Toward Second avenue."

"And disappeared?"

"And disappeared."

"Did you see any thing more of him that night?"

"I did, sir."

"When and under what circumstances?"

"In about a quarter of an hour, your honor, Mr. Neuman he comes back and stands leaning up against the railing across the way; and pretty soon crosses over and goes past us without speaking a word and enters the house, the door being open, and goes up the stairs."

My lawyer turned sharply to me. "Is this true?" he whispered. "No, it is entirely false," I answered. But I did not care.

"This," resumed the district-attorney, "was at about what hour?"

"Sure, you can reckon it for yourself, sir. It was a little after twelve."

"Very good. Now, at what hour did you shut up the house?"

"It was after one o'clock."

"Had the prisoner meantime gone out?"

"He had not."

"So that consecutively from the moment of his reëntrance to the hour of your closing up, he was in the house?"

"He was, sir."

"Meanwhile, who else had entered?"

"Two of the tenants, Mr. and Mrs. ——, the tenants of the first flat."

"Any one else?"

"No one else."

"That will do, Mrs. Marshall."

My lawyer cross-questioned her for an hour. His utmost art was powerless to shake her. She reiterated absolutely and word for word what she had already sworn to.

"John Marshall!" called the prosecutor.

It was the husband of the janitress. He

confirmed her story, and like her, was impregnable to Epstein's assaults.

"That's our case, your honor," said the district-attorney to the judge.

"Then we will adjourn until to-morrow," replied the latter.

I was handcuffed and led back to the Tombs, a crowd following. Epstein joined me in my cell.

"How about that key?" he demanded.

"I know nothing about it."

"How about the blood on your handkerchief?"

"I don't remember. Perhaps, as you suggested, I had a nose-bleed."

"You are sure you did not reënter the house?"

"Yes, I am sure of that. I went straight home and to bed."

"Then the Marshalls have lied out and out?"

"They have."

"Will you take the stand?"

"What for?"

"Why, to defend, to exonerate yourself."

"No."

"I feared as much. My friend, your life depends upon it."

"What do I care for my life?"

"But your good name—you cherish your good name, do you not?"

"No," I replied, stubbornly.

He attempted to plead, to reason with me. "No, no, no," I insisted. He went his way.

"Your honor," he said next day in court, "I ask that the jury be directed to render a verdict of not guilty, on the ground that the prosecution has failed to show any motive on the part of my client for the crime of which he is accused. Where the evidence is wholly circumstantial, as in the present case, a failure to show motive is fatal."

"I shall not hamper the jury," said the judge. "They must decide the case on its merits."

Epstein called, "Mrs. Burrows." My landlady took the witness-chair and testified to my excellent character. He called a handful more to testify to the same thing; then said, "I am ready to sum up, your honor."

"Do so," replied the Court.

Epstein spoke shortly and quietly. I remember his argument word for word; yet I was not conscious of attending to it at the time.

He said, "We are not prepared to contest the matters of fact alleged by the prosecution, nor to deny that their bearing is against my client. That Mr. Neuman was in Miss Pathzuol's company on the night of July 12th, and that the next morning a blood-stained handkerchief and a key to Mr. Tikulski's door were taken from his pocket, we admit. We will even admit that these circumstances are of a sort to cast suspicion upon him: all that we claim is that they are not sufficient to confirm that suspicion and make it certainty. It is the liberty, perhaps the life, of a human being which you have at your disposal. No matter how dark the shadow over him may be, if you can entertain a reasonable doubt of his guilt, you must acquit. And, putting it to you in all simplicity and sincerity, I ask: Does not the evidence offered by the prosecution leave room for a reasonable doubt? Is it not possible that some other hand than Neuman's dealt the blows by which Veronika Pathzuol met her

death? If such a possibility exists, you must give Neuman the benefit of it; you must acquit. Consider his good character; consider that he was the betrothed of the lady whose murderer they would make him out to be; consider that absolutely no trace of motive has been brought home to him; consider that on the contrary he was the one man who above all others most desired that she might live; consider these matters, and then decide whether in reasonableness his guilt is not in doubt. Remember that it is not sufficient that there should be a presumption against him. Remember that there must be proof. Remember also what a grave duty yours is, and how grave the consequences, should you send an innocent man to the gallows.

"Only one word more. I had naturally intended to place my client upon the stand, and let him justify himself by his own word of mouth. But, unfortunately, I am not able to do so, because morally and physically he is prostrated and unfitted for sustaining the strain of an examination. But after all, if you will for a moment imagine yourselves in Mr. Neu-

man's position, you can conceive that his defense must necessarily be of a passive, not of an active, kind. In his position what could you say? Why, only that you were ignorant of the whole transaction, and innocent despite appearances, and as much at loss for a solution of the mystery involving it as his honor himself. This is what Neuman would say were he able to go upon the stand. But one thing more he would say. He would impugn the veracity of the Marshalls. He would maintain that they lied *in toto* when they swore to his second entrance. He would tell you that when he left the house in Fifty-first street at midnight, he went directly home and to his bed, and that he returned no more until the next morning. And he would leave you to choose between his story and that of Mr. and Mrs. Marshall. My opponent will ask, 'Why not prove an alibi, then?' Because, when Mr. Neuman returned to his lodging-house late that night, every body, as might have been expected, was asleep. He encountered no one in the hall or on the stairs. He mounted straight to his own bed-chamber and went to bed.

"I trust the matter to your discretion. I am sure that you will weigh it carefully and conscientiously. You will realize that the life of a fellow man hangs upon your verdict, and you will deliberate well, if there be not, on the whole, a reasonable doubt in his favor. You will, I am confident, in no uncertain mind consign Ernest Neuman to the grave of a felon."

The district-attorney's address was florid and rhetorical. It lasted about two hours. He resumed the evidence. He said that an ordinary process of elimination would suffice to fasten the guilt upon the prisoner at the bar. The gist of his argument was that as Neuman had been the only person in the victim's company at the time of the commission of the crime, he was consequently the only person who by a physical possibility could be guilty. He warned the jury against allowing their sympathies to interfere with their judgment, and read at length from a law book respecting the value of circumstantial proof. He ridiculed Epstein's impeachment of the Marshalls, and added that even without their testimony the doctor's story and the police-captain's story, coupled with my own

"eloquent silence," were conclusive. It was the obvious duty of the jury to convict.

The judge delivered his charge, dealing with the legal aspect of the case.

Epstein rose again. "I request your honor," he said, "to charge that in the event of the jurymen finding that there is a reasonable doubt in Neuman's favor, they must acquit."

"I so charge," assented the judge.

"I request your honor," Epstein continued, "to charge that if the jurymen consider the fact of no motive having been shown, sufficient to establish a reasonable doubt of the defendant's guilt, they must acquit."

"I so charge you, gentlemen," said the judge.

The jurymen filed out of the room. The judge left the bench. It was now about four in the afternoon. Half an hour passed. The court-room began to empty. Another half hour passed. Only the court attendants, Epstein, the district-attorney's colleague, and the prisoner remained. One of the attendants held a whispered conference with Epstein: then said to me, "There is no prospect of a

speedy agreement. Come." I rose, followed him to the rear of the room, and was locked up in the prisoner's pen.

It got dark. I sat still in the dark and waited. The stupor bound my faculties like a frost.

It had been dark many hours when the door of the pen swung open. The same attendant again said, "Come."

The court-room was lighted by a few feeble gas jets. The judge sat on the bench. The district-attorney was laughing and chatting with him. Epstein said, "For God's sake, summon all your strength. They have agreed."

The jurymen entered in single file, took their places, settled themselves in their chairs. The judge and the prosecutor suspended their pleasantries. The clerk cleared his throat. There was a second of dead silence. Then, "Prisoner, stand up," called the clerk.

I stood up.

"Prisoner, look you upon the jury. Jury, look you upon the prisoner," the clerk cried, machine-like.

In the murky light of the gas I could have gathered nothing from the faces of the jurymen, even had I been concerned to do so.

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon a verdict?" the metallic voice of the clerk rang out.

The foreman rose. "We have," he answered.

"How say you, do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty of the offense for which he stands indicted?"

"Not guilty," said the foreman.

Epstein grasped my hand and crunched it hard. His own was clammy. He did not speak.

"Gentlemen of the jury, you say you find the prisoner at the bar not guilty of homicide in the first degree, and so your verdict stands recorded. Neuman, you are discharged." It was the clerk's last word.

I quitted the court-room, a free man. I was as indifferent to my freedom as I had been to my peril. There was no consciousness of relief in my breast.

Epstein stood at my elbow. "You must

be weak and faint," he said. "Come with me."

He led me through the silent streets and into a restaurant.

"This is an all-night place," he said, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "and much frequented by journalists. What will you have?"

"I am not hungry," I answered.

"Oh, but you must take something," he urged with a touch of ruefulness, "just a bite to celebrate our victory."

I drank a cup of coffee. When we were again out-doors, Epstein cried, "Why, see; it is beginning to get light. Morning already." A fresh wind blew in our faces, and the blackness of the sky was giving place to gray. "I must leave you now," said Epstein, "and hurry home. Where will you go?"

"Oh, I don't know," I replied. "I'll stroll about for a while. Good-by."

"Good-by."

VI.

I WALKED along aimlessly, recounting all the happenings of the last few weeks. I was astonished at my own blank insensibility. "Why, Veronika, the Veronika you loved, is dead, murdered," I said to myself, "and you, you who loved her, have been in prison and on trial for the crime. They have outraged you. They have sworn falsely against you. And the very core of your life has been torn out. Yet you—what has come over you? Are you heartless, have you no capacity for grief or indignation? Or is it that you are still half stunned? And that presently you will come to and begin to feel?" I strode on and on. It was broad day now. By and by I looked around.

I was in Second avenue, near its southern extremity. I was standing in front of a large red brick house. A white placard nailed to the

door caught my eye. "Room to let," it said in big black letters.

"Room to let?" I repeated. "Why, I am in need of a room." And I entered the house and engaged the room. The landlady asked my name. I told her it was Lexow, that having been the maiden-name of my mother. Neuman had acquired too unpleasant a notoriety through the published accounts of the trial. As Lexow I have been known ever since.

I employed an express agent to go to the Tombs and bring back my luggage.

Then I sat at my window and watched the people pass in the street. I sat there stock-still all day. I was aware of a vague feeling of wretchedness, of a vague craving for a relief which I could not name. As dusk gathered, a lump grew bigger and bigger in my throat. "I am beginning to be unhappy," I thought. "It is high time." My insensibility had frightened as well as puzzled me. Instinctively, I knew it could not last forever, knew it for the calm that precedes the storm. I was anxious that the storm should break while I was still strong

enough to cope with its fury. Waiting weakened me. Besides, I was ashamed of myself, hated myself as one shallow and disloyal. That I could be indifferent to Veronika's death! I, who had called myself her lover!

But now, as the lump grew in my throat, now, I thought, perhaps the hour has come. I sat still in my chair, fanning this forlorn spark of hope.

In the end, by imperceptible degrees, sleep stole upon me. It was natural. I had been up for more than six-and-thirty hours.

When I awoke a singular thing happened. Memory played me a singular trick.

I awoke, conscious of a great luminous joy in my heart. It was full morning. "Ah," I thought, "how bright the sunshine is! how sweet the air! To-day I will go to Veronika —to-day, after my lessons—and spend the rest of the afternoon and the evening at her side!" My heart leaped at this prospect of happiness in store: and I commenced to plan the afternoon and evening in detail. At last I jumped up, eager to begin the delicious day.

The trick that memory played me was a sim-

ple one, after all. The recent past had simply for the moment been obliterated, and I transported back for a moment into the old time. As I stood now in the middle of the floor, my eye was struck by the strangeness of my surroundings.

"Why, how is this?" I questioned. "Where am I?"

For a trice I was bewildered, but only for a trice. The truth reasserted itself all at once—rose up and faced me with its grim, deathly visage, as if cleared by a stroke of lightning. All at once I remembered; and what is more, all at once the stupor that had hung like a cloud between me and the facts, rolled away. I looked at my world. It was dust and ashes, a waste space, peopled by ghosts. My heart recoiled, sickened, horrified; then began to throb with the pain that had been ripening in its womb ever since the morning when Tikulski pointed to her, stretched murdered upon the bed.

Well, at last the storm had broken; at last I realized. At last I could no longer reproach myself for a want of sensibility. At last I had

my desire. I yielded myself to the enjoyment of it for the remainder of the day.

For weeks afterward I lay at the point of death. The slow convalescence that ensued afforded me plenty of time to examine my position from every point of view, and to get accustomed to understanding that the light had gone out of my sky. Of course I hated the fate that condemned me to regain my health. The thought that I should have to drag out years and years of blank, aimless, joyless life, appalled me. The future was a night through which I should be compelled to toil with no hope of morning. Strangely enough, the idea of suicide never once suggested itself.

When I was able to go out, I repaired to Epstein's office. Several little matters remained to be settled with him. As I was about to leave, he said, "Neuman, do you propose to take any steps toward finding the murderer?"

"Toward finding the murderer? Why, no; I had not thought of doing so."

"But of course you will. You won't allow the affair to rest in *statu quo?*"

"Why not?"

"Why, considering your relations to Miss Pathzuol, I should think your motive would be plain. Don't you want to see her murderer punished, her death atoned for?"

"Her death atoned for! Her death can never be atoned for. And the punishment of her murderer—would that restore her to me? Would that undo the fact that she is dead? Else, why should I bestir myself about it?"

"Common human nature ought to be enough; the natural wish to square accounts with him."

"Do you fancy, Epstein, that such an account as this can be squared? Suppose we had him here now at our mercy, what could we do by way of squaring accounts? Put him to death? Would that square the account? To say so would be to compare his miserable life to hers.—But besides, he is not at our mercy. We have no clew to him."

"Yes, on the contrary, we have."

"Indeed? What is it?"

"Why, the most apparent one. You are sure the Marshalls lied?"

"Oh yes; I am sure of that."

"Well, what earthly inducement could they have had for lying—for perjuring themselves, mind you, and running the risk of being caught and sent to prison—what earthly inducement, unless thereby they hoped to cover up their own guilt by throwing suspicion upon another man?"

"Yes; that is so. I had not thought of that."

"Well, now, if you and I are sure that the Marshalls participated in that crime, there is a solid starting-point. Now, will you not join me and help to fasten the guilt upon them?"

"What good would it do? I say again, would that give her back to me?"

"But, my dear fellow, even if you have no desire to see the murderer punished, you must at least wish to retaliate upon the wretches who jeopardized your life by their false swearing, who sought to thrust upon your innocent shoulders the brunt of their own offending."

"No; I confess, I have no such wish."

"But—but you amaze me. Have you not the ordinary instincts of a man?"

"It is the business of the police, any how. Let them move in the matter. You ought to understand that I am sick and tired, that all I wish for is to be left alone. No, no; if the Marshalls should ever be brought to justice it will not be by my efforts. The police can manage it for themselves."

"But there is just the point." Epstein hesitated; at length went on, "There is just the point I wanted to bring to your notice. It will be hard for you to hear, but you ought to understand—it is only right that I should tell you—that—that—why, hang it, the police will remain idle because they suppose they have already finished the business, already put their finger on the—the man."

"Well, why should they remain idle on that account? Why don't they arrest him and try him, as they did me, before a jury?"

"You don't comprehend, Neuman. The fact of the matter is—you must pardon me for saying so—the fact is, they still suspect you."

"Suspect me? What, after the very jury has acquitted me? I thought the verdict of the jury was conclusive."

"So it is, in one sense. They can't put you in jeopardy again. But this is the way they stand. They say, 'We haven't sufficient legal evidence to warrant a conviction, but we feel morally certain, all the same, and so there's no use prying further.' That is my reason for broaching the subject and for urging you so strongly. You ought to clear your character, vindicate your innocence, by proving to the police that they are wrong, that the guilt rests with their own witnesses, the Marshalls."

"I thank you, Epstein, for telling me this. I am glad to realize just what my status is. But let me cherish no misconception. Is this theory of the police—is it held by others?"

"To be frank, I am afraid it is. The newspapers took it up and—and I'm afraid it's the opinion of the public generally."

"Then the verdict did not signify?"

"Well, at least not so far as public opinion is concerned."

"So that I am to rest under this stigma all my life?"

"Why, no—not if you choose to exonerate yourself, as I have indicated."

"Oh, I don't care about that. I don't care to exonerate myself. What difference would it make? Would it make the fact that she is lost to me forever one shade less true? Only, it is well that I should have a clear understanding of my position, and I thank you for giving it to me."

"You don't mean to say that you are going to drop the case there?" Epstein demanded. "I assure you, I never should have opened my mouth about it, had I foreseen this."

"Don't reproach yourself. You have simply done your duty. It was my right to hear this from you.—Yes, of course I shall drop the case. Good-by."

"You will think better of it; you will reconsider it; you will come back to-morrow in a wiser frame of mind. Good-by."

As I reëntered my lodging-house the landlady met me; thrust an envelope into my hand; and vanished.

I was surprised to see that the envelope was addressed to "E. Neuman, Esquire." It will be remembered that I had introduced myself as Mr. Lexow. I tore it open. It inclosed a

memorandum of my arrears of rent and a notice to quit, the latter couched thus: "Mr. Neuman's real name having been learned during his sickness, please move out as soon as you have paid up."

I caught sight of myself in the glass. "So," I said, "you are the person whom people suspect as a murderer! and it is thus that you are to be regarded all the rest of your life—as one touched with the plague."

I counted my ready money and paid the landlady her due.

"I am very sorry," she began, "but the reputation of my house—but the other lodgers —but—"

"You needn't apologize," I interposed, and left the house.

It occurred to me that it would be necessary to find work whereby to earn my livelihood. I had quite forgotten that I was poor. What should I do?

The notion of giving music lessons again I could not entertain. Music had become hateful to me. I could not touch my violin. I could not even unlock the case and look at the

instrument. It was too closely associated with the cause of my sorrow. The mere memory of a strain of music, drifting through my mind, was enough to cut my heart like a knife. Music was out of the question.

I had had a little money in the Savings Bank. With this sum I had intended to furnish the rooms which she and I were to have occupied! Now it was all spent; three-quarters swallowed up by the expenses of my trial, the residue by the expenses of my illness and the landlady's score for rent. I opened my purse. I had less than a dollar left. So it behooved me to lose no time. I must find a means of support at once.

But music apart, what remained?—My wits were sluggish. Revolving the problem over and over as I walked along, they could arrive at no solution.

We were in December. The day was bitter cold. I had not proceeded a great distance before the cold began to tell upon me. "I must step in somewhere and warm myself," I said. I was still feeble. I could not endure the stress of the weather as I might have done formerly. I made for the first shop I saw.

It was a wine-shop, kept by a German, as the name above the door denoted. I took a table near the stove and asked for a glass of wine. As my senses thawed, I became aware that a quarrel was going on in the room—angry voices penetrated my hearing.

The proprietor, a fat man in his shirt-sleeves, stood behind the bar. His face was very red. In his native tongue loudly and volubly he was berating one of his assistants—a waiter with a scared face.

"Go, go at once. You are a rascal, a good-for-naught," he was saying; "here is your money. Clear out, before I hurt you."

The culprit was nervously untying his apron strings. "Yes, sir, at once, at once," he stammered. In the end he put on his hat and accomplished a frightened exit. His *confrères* watched his decapitation with repressed sympathy.

After he had gone, the proprietor's wrath began perceptibly to mitigate. He settled down in his chair. The tint of his skin gradually cooled. He lighted a cigar. He picked up a newspaper.

I had taken in these various proceedings mechanically, without bestowing upon them any special attention. But now an idea, prompted by them, began to fructify. By and by I approached the counter and ventured a timid, "I beg your pardon."

The proprietor glanced up.

"I beg your pardon," I continued in German, "but you have discharged a waiter!"

"Well?" he responded.

"Well, you will probably need somebody to take his place?"

"Well? What of it?"

"I—I—that is, if you think I would do, I should like the employment."

The proprietor looked thoughtful. He scratched his chin, puffed vigorously at his cigar, and asked my name. He shook his head when I confessed that I had had no experience of the business; but seemed impressed by my remark that on that account I would be willing to serve for smaller wages. He mentioned a stipend. It was ridiculously slender; but what cared I? It would keep body and soul together. I desired nothing more.

"What references can you give?" he inquired.

I mentioned Epstein.

"All right," he said. "You can go to work at once. To-morrow I will look up your reference. If it be satisfactory, I will keep you."

The *Oberkellner* provided me with an apron and a short alpaca jacket; and in this garb Ernest Neuman, musician, merged his identity, as he supposed for good and all, into that of Ernest Lexow, waiter.

VII.

TWO years elapsed. Their history is easily told. I lived and moved and had my being in a profound apathy to all that passed around me. The material conditions of my existence caused me no distress. I dwelt in a dingy room in a dirty house; ate poor food, wore poor clothing, worked long hours; was treated as a menial and had to put up with a hundred indignities every day; but I was wholly indifferent, had other things to think of. My thoughts and my feelings were concentrated upon my one great grief. My heart had no room left in it for pettier troubles. I do not believe that there was a waking moment in those two years when I was unconscious of my love and my loss. Veronika abode with me morning, noon, and night. My memory of her and my unutterable sorrow for her engrossed me to the exclusion of all else.

My violin I did not unlock from year's end

to year's end. I could not get over my hatred for the bare idea of music. Music recalled the past too vividly. I had not the fortitude to endure it. The sound of a hand-organ in the street was enough to cause me a twinge like that of a nerve touched by steel.

As the winter leaped into spring, and days came which were the duplicates of those I had spent with her, of course my pain grew more acute. The murmur of out-door life and the warmth and perfume of the spring air, penetrated to the very quick of memory and made it quiver. But at about this time I began to taste an unexpected pleasure. It was an odd one. Of old, during our betrothal, I had been tormented almost nightly by bad dreams. As surely as I laid my head upon its pillow, so surely would I be wafted off into an ugly nightmare—she and I were separated—we had quarreled—she had ceased to love me. But now that my worst dream had been excelled by the reality, I began to have dreams of quite another sort. As soon as sleep closed upon me, the truth was annihilated, Veronika came back. All night long we were supremely happy; we

played and sang and talked together, just as we had been used to do. These dreams were astonishingly life-like. Indeed, in the morning after one, I would wonder which was the very fact, the dream or the waking. My nightly dream got to be a goal to look forward to during the day. But as the summer deepened, I dreamed less and less frequently, and at length ceased altogether.

Autumn returned, and winter; and my life did not vary. Time was slow about healing my wounds, if time meant to heal them at all. But time did not mean to heal them at all, as ere long became apparent.

One afternoon in November, a month or so before the two years would have terminated, a young man entered the shop and ensconced himself at a table in the corner. Having delivered his order and lighted a cigarette, he pulled out a yellow covered French book from the pocket of his coat, and speedily became immersed in its perusal. I don't know what it was in the appearance of this young man that attracted my attention. Almost from the moment of his advent my eyes kept going

back to him. His own eyes being fastened upon his book, I could stare at him without giving offense. And stare at him I did to my heart's content.

He was a tall young fellow and wore his hair a trifle longer than the fashion is. He was dressed rather carelessly ; he knocked his cigarette ashes about so that they soiled his clothes. He had a dark skin, and, in singular contrast to it, a pair of large blue eyes. His forehead, nose, and chin were strongly modeled and expressed force of character without pretending to conventional beauty. He was not a handsome, but a distinguished looking man. The absence of beard and mustache lent him somewhat of the aspect of a Catholic priest. His big blue eyes were full of good-nature and intelligence. He had a quick, energetic way of moving which announced plenty of dash within. He had entered the shop like a gust of wind, had shot across the floor and taken his seat at the table as if impelled by the force of gunpowder, and now he turned the pages of his book with the air of a man whose life depended upon what he was doing. No sooner had he consumed one

of his cigarettes than he applied a match to its successor.

I stared at him mercilessly and wondered what manner of individual he was.

"He is not a business-man," I said, "nor a lawyer nor a doctor: that is evident from his whole bearing; and besides, what would he be doing in a wine-shop at this hour of the afternoon? I don't think he is a musician, either—he hasn't the musician's eyes or mouth. Possibly he is a school-teacher, or it may be—yes, I should say most certainly, he is an artist of some sort, a painter or sculptor, or perhaps a writer."

My speculations had proceeded thus far when in the quick, energetic way above alluded to the young man looked at his watch, slammed to his book, shoved back his chair, and commenced hammering upon the table with the bottom of his empty beer-mug.

"Yes, sir," I said, responding to his summons.

"Check," he demanded laconically.

I handed him his check. He thrust his fingers into his waistcoat-pocket for the money. They roamed about, apparently unrewarded.

A puzzled expression came upon his face. The fingers paused in their occupation; presently emerged and dived into another pocket and then into another. The puzzled expression deepened: at last changed its character, became an expression of intense annoyance. He knitted his brows and bit his lip. Glancing up, he said, "This is really very awkward. I—I find I haven't a *sou* about me. It's—bother it all, I suppose you'll take me for a beat. But—here, I can leave my watch."

"Oh, that's entirely unnecessary," I hastened to put in. "Don't let it distress you. To-morrow, or any other day you happen to be passing, will do as well."

He looked at the same time surprised and relieved. "That's not a conservative way of doing business," he said. "How do you know I may not take advantage of you?"

"Oh, I'm quite at rest about that. You need not be disturbed."

"Well, such faith in human nature is stimulating," he answered. "I should hate to imperil it. So you may be sure I'll turn up to-morrow. Meanwhile I'm awfully obliged."

Thereat he went away.

I paid his reckoning from my own purse, and immediately fell again to wondering about him.

By and by it occurred to me, "Why, that is the first human being who has taken you out of yourself for the last two years!" And thereupon I transferred my wonder to the interest he had managed to arouse in my own preoccupied mind. Then gradually my thoughts flowed back into their customary channels.

But early the next day I caught myself asking, "Will he return?" and devoutly hoping that he would. Not on account of the money; I had no anxiety about the money. But somehow, self-centered as I was, I had felt drawn toward this blue-eyed young man, and anticipated seeing him again with an approach to genuine pleasure.

Surely enough, in the course of the afternoon the door opened and he entered.

"Ah," he said, "you see, I am faithful to my trust. Here is the lucre: count it and be satisfied that the sum is just. Really," he added, dropping the mock theatrical manner he had assumed, "really, it was frightfully embar-

rassing yesterday. But I'm a victim of absent-mindedness, and in changing my clothes I had omitted to transfer my pocket-book from the one suit to the other. I can't tell you how much indebted I am for your considerateness. I suppose you are overrun with dead-beats who play that dodge regularly—eh?"

I gave him the answer his question called for, served him with the drinkables he ordered, and stationed myself at a respectful distance.

He lighted his inevitable cigarette and produced his book. He read and smoked for a few moments in silence. Suddenly he flung the book angrily upon the table, pushed back his glass, and uttered an audible "Confound it!"

I hastened forward to learn the subject of his discomposure and to supply what remedy I might.

"I beg your pardon," I ventured, "is there any thing wrong with the wine?"

"Eh—what?" he queried. "With the wine? Any thing wrong? Oh—I perceive. Oh, no—the wine's all right. It's this beastly pedantic author. He is describing the Jewish ritual, and now just observe his idiocy. He goes on at a

great rate about the beauty of a certain prayer —gets the reader's curiosity all screwed up— and then—fancy his airs!—and then quotes the stuff in the original Hebrew! It's ridiculous. He doesn't even condescend to affix a translation in a foot-note. Look."

He opened the book and pointed, with a finger dyed brown by tobacco-smoke, to the troublesome passage.

Now I, having been brought up as an orthodox Jew, had a smattering of Hebrew, and at a glance I saw that I could easily translate the few sentences in question. So, impulsively and without stopping to reflect that my conduct might seem officious, I said, "If you would like, I think perhaps I may be able to aid you."

"What!" he exclaimed, fixing a pair of wide open eyes upon my face.

"Yes, I think I can translate it."

"The deuce!" he cried. "I didn't suspect you were a scholar. How in the name of goodness did you learn Hebrew?"

"A scholar I am not, surely enough: but I am a Jew, and like the rest of my faith I studied Hebrew as a boy."

"Ah, I understand. Well, fire away.

I took the book and read the Hebrew aloud. It was a prayer, which, when a child, I had known by heart. Afterward I explained its sense while my friend jotted it down with a pencil upon the margin.

"Thanks," he was good enough to say. "I don't know what I should have done without your help.—And so you are a Jew? You don't look it. You look like a full-blown Teuton. But I congratulate you all the same."

"Congratulate me for looking like a Teuton?"

The shop being empty, there was no harm in my joining in conversation with a client. Besides, I did not stop to think whether there was harm in it or not. I yielded to the attraction which this young man exerted over me.

"No—for belonging to the ancient and honorable race of Jews," he answered. "Your ancestors were civilized and dwelt in cities and wrote poems, thousands of years ago: whereas mine at that epoch inhabited caves and dressed in bearskins and occasionally dined on a roasted neighbor. I should be proud of my lineage, were I a Jew."

"But it is the fashion for the Gentiles to despise us."

"Oh, bosh! It is the fashion for a certain ignorant, stupid set of Philistines to do so—but those who pretend to the least enlightenment, on the contrary, regard the Jews as a most enviable people. They envy your history, they envy the success that waits upon your enterprises. For my part, I believe the whole future of America depends upon the Jews."

"Indeed, how is that?"

"Why, look here. What is the American people to-day? There is no American people—or rather there are twenty American peoples—the Irish, the German, the Jewish, the English, and the Negro elements—all existing independently at the same time, and each as truly American as any of the others. Good! But in the future, after emigration has ceased, these elements will begin to amalgamate. A single people of homogeneous blood will be the consequence. Do you follow?"

"I think I follow. But the Jews?"

"But the Jews—precisely, the Jews. It is the Jewish element that is to leaven the whole

lump—color the whole mixture. The English element alone is, so to speak, one portion of pure water; the German element, one portion of *eau sucrée*; now add the Jewish—it is a dose of rich strong wine. It will give fire and flavor to the decoction. The future Americans, thanks to the Jew in them, will have passions, enthusiasms. They will paint great pictures, compose great music, write great poems, be capable of great heroism. Have I said enough?"

The result was that we chatted together for half an hour with the freedom of old acquaintances. He quite made me forget that I was his servant for the time, and led me to speak out my mind with the unreserve of equal to equal. I enjoyed a peculiar sense of exhilaration that lasted even after he had gone away. In spite of myself I could not help relishing this contact with a superior man. Again I fell to wondering about his occupation. I was more and more persuaded that he must be an artist of some sort, or a writer.

The next day he came again, and the next, and the next, and regularly every day at about the same hour for a fortnight. As surely as he

seated himself at the corner table, so surely would he beckon to me and begin to talk. In these dialogues he afforded me no end of entertainment, touching in a racy way upon a score of topics. He had resided abroad for some years —seemed equally at home in Paris, Rome, and Munich—and his anecdotes of foreign life were like glimpses into dream-land for me. He had the faculty of making me forget myself, and for that reason, if for no other, I should have valued his friendliness. Our interviews occurred as bright spots in the sad gray monotone of my daily life.

VIII.

BUT one day, the fortnight having passed, he failed to put in an appearance. I was heartily disappointed. I spent the rest of the afternoon fathoms down in the blues—like an opium eater deprived of his daily portion. It was Saturday, and as usual at nightfall the shop filled up and the staff of waiters was kept busy. Toward ten o'clock, long before which hour I had ceased altogether to expect him, the door opened and my friend came in. He squeezed up between a couple of Germans at one of the tables, and sat there smoking and reading an evening paper. I had no opportunity to do more than acknowledge the smile of greeting with which he favored me; and it chanced that the table at which he was established fell under the jurisdiction of another waiter. He consumed cigarette after cigarette and read his paper through to the very advertisements on the last page; and still, while the other guests

came and went, he staid on. At the hour for shutting up he had not yet shown any disposition to depart. His attendant carried off his empty glass and hovered uneasily around his chair; but he failed to take the hint. At length the proprietor began to turn out the lights. At this he got up, buttoned his overcoat, waved a farewell at me, and passed beyond the door.

I followed soon after. Turning up Second avenue, I felt a hand laid gently upon my shoulder. "I have been waiting for you," said my friend. "Which way do you walk?" Without pausing for a reply, "You won't mind my walking with you?" and he linked his arm in mine.

"I was afraid I had seen the last of you for the day," I answered. "This is a pleasant surprise, I assure you."

After a few yards in silence he resumed, "I say—oh, by the way, you have never told me your name?"

"My name is Lexow."

"What? Lexow?—Well, I say, Lexow, without being indiscreet, I should like to ask

how under the sun you ever came to be employed as you are around in Herr Schwartz's saloon."

"I don't understand," I said.

"Oh, come now; yes, you do understand, too," he rejoined. "Don't take offense and be dignified. We're both young men, and there's no use in trying to mystify each other. You needn't tell me that you have always been a waiter. You're too intelligent, too much of a gentleman in every way. I'm not blind; and it doesn't require especially long spectacles to perceive that you are something different from what you would have us believe. I've seen a good deal of the world and I'm not prone to romancing. So I don't fancy that you're a king in exile or a Russian nobleman or anything of that sort. But at the same time I'm sure you're capable of better things than waiting, and I want to know what the trouble is, so that I can help to set you back on the right track."

"One confidence deserves another. I have told you my name, tell me yours."

"My name is Merivale, Daniel.—But don't change the subject."

"Well, Mr. Merivale, I will say then, that if any other man had spoken to me as you have just done, I should certainly have been offended. I say this not to reproach you, but to show by the fact that I'm not offended how much I think of you. So you mustn't take offense either when I add that I should prefer to speak of other things."

"After that I suppose I ought to consider myself snubbed. But, I sha'n't, notwithstanding. I shall simply take the whole confession for granted. Now, Mr. Mysterious, I will venture to make three allegations of fact about you. Promise to set me right if I am wrong. I assure you I am actuated by disinterested motives. All you will have to do will be to say yes or no. Promise."

"I can't pledge myself blindfold. But if the 'allegations of fact' are within certain limits, I will satisfy you—although I repeat I would prefer a different subject."

"Capital! Well, then, for a beginner: You are or were or have at some time hoped to be, an artist of some sort—eh?"

"How did you find that out?"—The query

escaped involuntarily. For a moment a dread lest he might have discovered my true identity, darkened my mind: but it was transitory.

"Oh, you indorse allegation number one! No matter how I found it out. I don't really know myself—unless it was by that instinct which kindred spirits have for recognizing one another. But now for allegation number two. Its form shall be negative. You are not a painter, a sculptor, an actor, or a poet."

"No, neither of them."

"*Brava!* I could have sworn to it. Therefore you are a musician. And I will have the hardihood to guess that your instrument is the violin."

"I confess, Mr. Merivale, that you surprise me. You have divined the truth, but for the life of me, I don't see how."

"Why, by the simplest of possible means. If one is only observing and has a knack of putting two and two together, most riddles can easily be undone. After our first interview I said, That fellow is above his station; after our second, That fellow is an artist; after our third, I'll bet my head he is a musician. I have told

you it was partly instinct, that made me set you down for an artist. It was partly the tone of your conversation—your tendency to warm up over matters pertaining to the arts, and to cool down when our talk verged the other way. Then a—a certain ignorance that you betrayed about pictures and books and statuary helped on the process of elimination. I concluded that you were a musician—which conclusion was strengthened by the fact of your being a Jew. Music is the art in which the Jews excel. And one day a chance attitude that you assumed, a twist of the neck, a hitch of the shoulder, cried out *Violin!* as clearly as if by word of mouth—though no doubt the wish fostered the thought, for I have always had a predilection for violinists. Now I will go further and declare that a chagrin of one kind or another is accountable for your present mode of life. A few years ago I should have said: A woman in the case—disappointment in love—and so forth. Now, having become more worldly, I say: Fear of failure, lack of self-confidence. Answer."

"Since you are such an adept at clairvoy-

ance, I need not answer. But don't let this thing become one-sided. You too are an artist, as you have hinted and as I had fancied. And your art is?"

"Guess. I'll wager you'll never guess."

"No; I confess I am at a loss. You seem equally familiar with all the arts. One moment I think you are a painter; the next, a sculptor. I'm sure you're not a musician. And on the whole it seems most probable that you are in some way connected with literature. I don't know why."

"Good! You have hit the nail on the head! In spite of my slangy speech and my worldly wisdom, learn that I aspire to become a poet! the poet of the practical, of the every day, of the passions of modern life. As yet, however, I am, as the French put it, *inédit*. The magazines repudiate me. I am too downright, too careless of euphemism, to suit their dainty pages. But this is aside from the point. The point is that I want to hear you play."

"Impossible. For me music is a thing of the past. I haven't touched a violin these two years. I shall never touch one again."

"Bah, bah! Excuse my frankness, but don't be a child. If you haven't touched your violin for two years, you have allowed two precious years to leak away. All the more reason for stopping the leak at once. Come in."

"We had arrived in front of an English-basement house in Seventeenth street.

"Come in," he repeated. "This is where I live."

"It is too late," I said.

"Nonsense," he retorted. "It is never too late. Advance!"

I followed him into the house.

The room to which he conducted me was precisely the sort of room one would have expected. It was chock-full of odds and ends, piled about in hopeless confusion. The walls were hung with a reddish paper, and freckled with framed and unframed pictures—etchings, engravings, water-colors, charcoals—some suspended correctly by wires from the cornice, others pinned up loosely by their corners. The ceiling was tinted to harmonize with the walls. The floor was carpetless, of hard wood, waxed

to a high degree of slipperiness, and relieved by a sporadic rug or two. Bits of porcelain and metal ware, specimens of old Italian carving, Chinese sculptures in ivory, rich tapestries, bronze and plaster reproductions of antique statuary, and books of all sizes and descriptions and in all stages of decay, were scattered hither and thither without a pretense to order. On the whole the effect of the room was pleasant, though it resembled somewhat closely that of a curiosity-shop gone mad. My host informed me that it was Liberty Hall and bade me make myself at home. Producing a flagon of Benedictine, he said laconically, "Drink."

We drank together in silence. Turning his emptied glass upside down, "Now," he cried, "now for the music. Now you are going to play."

"Oh, I thought you had forgotten about that," I answered.

"'Tis not among my talents to forget," he declaimed, theatrically. "You must prepare to limber up your fingers."

"Really, Mr. Merivale," I insisted, "you don't know what you are asking. I should no

more think of touching a violin to-night than, than—no need of a comparison. The long and short of the matter is that I have the best of reasons for not wanting to play, and that the most you can urge to the contrary won't alter my resolution. I hate to seem boorish or disobliging, but really I can't help it. Besides, my instrument is a mile away and unstrung, and it is so late that the other occupants of this house would be annoyed. And as the subject is extremely painful to me, I wish you would let it drop."

"Oh, if you are going to treat the matter *au grand sérieux*," said Merivale, "I suppose I must give in. But you have no idea of how disappointed I shall be. As for an instrument, I've a fiddle of my own in the next room—one that I scrape on now and then myself. As for the other occupants of this house, I pay double rent on the condition that my quarters are to be my castle, and that I can create as much rumpus in them, day and night, as I desire. If I were disposed to do so, I could make this a broad proposition of ethics, and maintain that as an artist you have no right to decline to

exercise your skill. Your talent is given you in trust—a trust which you violate when you bury the talent in the ground. But I won't go so far as that. I'll simply ask you as a favor to play for me, and, if after that you are still obstinate, I'll hold my peace."

"Well, I am forced to be obstinate. Now let's change the subject."

"I bow my head. Only, perhaps you will make a single concession. As I have said, I am the possessor of a fiddle. It is one I picked up in Rome. I bought it of a seedy Italian nobleman; and he claimed it for a rare one—a Stradivari, in fact. I'm no judge of such things, and most likely was taken in. Will you look at it and give me your opinion?"

"Oh, yes, I have no objection to doing that," I said, glad to prove myself not altogether churlish.

"Here it is," he continued, putting the violin into my hands.

It was a beautiful instrument from an optical standpoint. What remained of the varnish was ruddy and crystalline, and as smooth as amber.

The curves were exquisite. It was also either genuinely old or a marvelous imitation. Its interior was dark and dirty—an excellent condition. I could descry no label there—another favorable sign. Was it indeed a Stradivari? Formerly it had been an ambition of mine to play upon a Stradivari; an ambition which I had never had a chance to gratify, because among the dozen so-called Stradivaris that I had come upon here and there, I had found not one but betrayed its fraudulent origin from the instant the bow was drawn across the strings. Something of the old feeling revived in me as I held this instrument in my hands, and before I had thought, my finger mechanically picked the *A* string. The clear, bell-like tone that responded, caused me to start. I had never heard such a tone as this produced before by the mere picking of a string.

"I believe you have a treasure here," I exclaimed. "I'm not connoisseur enough to say whether it is a Stradivari; but whoever its maker was, it's a superb instrument."

"Do you really think so?" cried Merivale. "Try it with the bow."

He thrust the bow upon me. Without allowing myself time to hesitate, I touched the bow to the strings: the result was a voice from heaven, so clear, so broad, so sweet, of such magnetic quality, that it actually frightened me, made my heart palpitate, summoned a myriad dead emotions back to life. And yet I felt an irresistible temptation to continue, to push the experiment at least a trifle further.

"Tune it up," said Merivale.

I complied. That was the final stroke. After I had drawn the bow for a second time across the cat-gut, there was no resisting. I lost possession of myself: ere I knew it, I was pouring my life out through the wonderful voice of the Stradivari.

I don't remember what I played. Most probably it was a medley of reminiscences. I only remember that for the first few minutes I suffered the tortures of the damned—an army of devils were tugging at my heart-strings—and withal I had no power to restrain the motion of my arm and lay the violin aside. Then, I remember, the pain gradually turned to pleasure, to an immense sense of relief, as

though all the woe pent up in the recesses of my soul had suddenly found an outlet and was gushing forth in a tremendous flood of sound. As I felt it ebbing away, like a poison let loose from my veins, somehow time and space were annihilated, facts were undone, truth changed to falsehood. Veronika and I were alone together in the pure realm of spirit while I told her in the million tempestuous variations of my music the whole story of my sorrow and my adoration. I listened to the music precisely as though it had been played by another person; I heard it grow soft and softer and melt into a scarcely audible whisper; I heard it soar away into mighty, passionate *crescendi;* I heard it modulate swiftly from prayerful minor to triumphant, defiant major; I heard it laugh like a child, plead like a lover, sob like Mary at the tomb of Christ; I heard it wax wrathful like a God in anger. And I—I was caught up and borne away and tossed from high to low by it like a leaf on the bosom of the ocean. And at last I heard the sharp retort of a breaking string; and I sank into a chair, exhausted.

I think I must have come very near to faint-

ing. When I gathered together my senses and opened my eyes I was weak, nerveless, bewildered. Merivale stood in front of me, his gaze fixed upon my face.

"In God's name," I heard him say, "tell me what you are. Such music as you have played upsets all my established notions, undermines my philosophy, forces me back in spite of myself to a belief in witchcraft and magic. Are you a Merlin? Have you indeed the secret of enchantment? It is hardly credible that simple human genius wove that wonderful web of melody—which has at last come to an end, thank heaven! If I had had to listen a moment longer, I should have broken down. The strain was too intense. You have taken me with you through hell and heaven."

Still weak and nerveless, I could not command my voice.

"You are faint," he exclaimed. "The effort has tired you out. No wonder: here—drink this." He held a glass to my lips. I drank its contents. Presently I felt a glow of warmth radiating through my limbs. Then I was able to stir and to speak.

"Through hell and heaven," I repeated, echoing his words. "Yes, we have been through hell and heaven."

"It was a frightful experience," he added, "more than I bargained for when I asked you to play."

"You must forgive me; I was carried away; I had no intention of harrowing you, but I had not played for so long a time that my emotions got the best of me."

"Oh, don't talk like that," he protested. "It was a frightful experience, but it was one I would not have missed. I had never dreamed that music could work such an effect upon me; but now I can understand the ardor with which musicians love their art; I can understand the claims they make in its behalf. It is indeed the most powerful influence that can be brought to bear upon the feelings. For my part I never was so deeply moved before—not even by Dante. But tell me, how did you acquire your wonderful skill? What must your life have been in order that you should play like that?"

"Of 'wonderful skill' I have little enough. To-

night perhaps I played with a certain enthusiasm because I was excited. But you attribute too much to me. A musician would have descried a score of faults. My technique has deserted me; but even when I used to practice regularly, I occupied a very low grade in my profession."

"I care not how you used to play, nor how you were rated, nor how faulty your technique may be. You play now with a force that is more than human. I am not given either to flattery or to exaggeration, and I am not easily stirred up. But you *have* stirred me up, clear down to the marrow of my bones. Perhaps these two years of abstinence have but ripened the genius that was already in you—allowed it time to ferment. Tell me, what depths of joy and sorrow have you sounded to gather the secrets you have just revealed with your violin? What has your life been?"

"My life has been a very simple one, and for the most part very prosaic."

"You might as well call the sun cold, the sea motionless, as pretend that your life has been prosaic. Friend, the only element that gives life and magnetism to art is profound, human

truth. That which touches us in a picture, a poem, or a symphony, is its likeness to the truth, its nature, especially its human nature. That is what makes Wilhelm Meister a powerful book, because each page is written, so to speak, in human blood. That is what makes Titian's Assumption a great picture, because the agony in the Madonna's face is true human agony. And that is what gave your music of a moment since the power to pierce the very innermost of my heart—because it was true music, the expression of true human passion. Tell me, what manner of life have you lived, to learn so much of the deep things of human experience?"

I looked into his clear, earnest eyes. They shone with a sympathy that fell as balm upon my wounds. An impulse that I could not battle with unsealed my lips. I told him my whole story from first to last.

Some of the time, as I was speaking, he sat motionless with his brow buried in his hands. Some of the time he paced up and down the floor. He smoked constantly. Twice or thrice he extended his palm to bid me pause, indicat-

ing by nodding his head when he wished me to go on. Not once did he verbally interrupt, nor for a long while after I had done did he speak.

By and by he grasped my hand and wrenched it hard and said, "Will—will you understand by my silence what I feel? It would be sacrilege for me to talk about this thing. I—I—oh, what a fool I am to open my mouth!"

But presently he cried, "The injustice, the humiliation, that you have been put to! It is shameful. To think that they dared to try you, as though the mere sight of your face was not sufficient to prove you incapable of the first thought of crime! But I can understand your motive for not wishing to hunt the Marshalls down. Only of this I am sure, that if there is any such thing as equity in this world, some day their guilt will be made manifest and they will receive the chastisement which they deserve. Oh, how you have suffered! I tell you, it sobers a man, it reminds him of the seriousness of things, the spectacle of such a colossal sorrow as yours has been."

Again silence. Eventually he crossed over to the window and sent the curtains rattling

across their pole. It was getting light outside. I pulled myself together. Rising, "Well," I said, "good-by. My visit to you has been like a sojourn in another world. Now, I must return to my own dreary sphere. Forgive me if I have wearied you with all this talk about myself. I seemed to speak without meaning to —involuntarily. Once started, I could not have stopped myself, had I tried."

"Don't speak like that," he rejoined hastily and with a look of reproach. "Don't make me feel that you repent your confidence. It was only right, only natural, that you should unbosom yourself to me. It was the consecration of our friendship. Friendship is never complete until it has been tested in the fire of sorrow. Mere companionship in pleasure is not friendship. No matter how intimately we might have seen each other, we should never have been friends until you had told me this.—Moreover, don't get up. You must not think of going away as yet."

"As yet? Why, I have outstaid the night itself. I must make haste or I shall be behindhand at the shop."

"You must not think of returning to the shop to-day. You must go to bed and have some sleep. When you awake again I shall have a proposition to lay before you. For the present follow me—"

"But Mr. Merivale—"

"But I anticipate your objections. But they are worthless. But the shop may, and I devoutly hope it will, be struck by lightning. Furthermore, if you are anxious about it, I'll send word around to the effect that you're unwell and not able to report for duty. That's the truth. But any how I have a particular reason for wanting to keep possession of you for a while longer. Now, be tractable—as an indulgence, do what I ask."

There was no resisting the appeal in Merivale's big blue eyes. I followed him as he desired. He led me into the adjoining room, where there were two narrow brass bedsteads side by side.

"You see," he said, "I was prepared for you. Here is your couch, ready for your reception. It's rather odd about this. I'm a great hand for presentiments: and experience has taught me to believe in their coming true. When I

took these quarters I said to myself, 'Pythias, the Damon you have been waiting for all these years will arrive while you are bivouacked here. Be therefore in a condition to welcome him properly.' I don't know why, but I was thoroughly persuaded, I felt in my bones, that Damon's advent would occur during my occupancy of these rooms. So I bought two bedsteads and two dressing-stands instead of one.—I have got the heroes of the old legend somewhat mixed up; can't remember which was which: but I trust I'm not egotistic in assigning the part of Damon to you and keeping that of Pythias for myself. At any rate, it's a mere figure of speech, and as such must be taken. Now, Damon or Pythias, whichever you may be, in begging you to make yourself comfortable here, I am simply inviting you to partake of your own."

As he rattled on thus, he had produced sheets and blankets from a chest of drawers near at hand, and now was making the bed with the deftness of an expert.

"There," he exclaimed, bestowing a farewell poke upon the pillow, "now go to bed with a

clear conscience and a mind at peace. I shall speedily follow. In the morning—I mean in the afternoon—we will resume our session."

He had the delicacy to leave me alone. I was too fatigued to reason about what I was doing. I undressed quickly, got into bed, and fell sound asleep.

The sunlight was streaming through the window when I awoke. Merivale was seated upon the foot of the bed.

"Ah," he cried, as I opened my eyes, "welcome back!"

"Eh, how?" I queried, perplexed for the moment. "Oh yes; I remember. Have I been asleep long?"

"So long that I thought you were never going to wake up. It's past four in the afternoon, and you have been sleeping steadily since six this morning. I had the utmost hardship in subduing my impatience. Ten solid hours of sleep! You must have been thoroughly exhausted."

"You ought to have roused me. One can gorge one's system with sleep as easily as with

food. I have slept too much. But—but how shall I ever make amends at the shop?"

"Bother the shop! The shop no longer exists. I have caused its annihilation during the day."

"Have you Aladdin's lamp?"

"I have a substitute for it, at least. The shop has been transported to Alaska."

"That was unkind of you. Now I shall have to undergo the expense of a journey thither. Besides, I prefer a more temperate climate.—But seriously, did you send word as you agreed to?"

"I saw Herr Schwartz personally."

"Ah, that was very thoughtful. Did you succeed in appeasing him?"

"I told him that you wished to resign your position; and when he began to splutter, I added that in consideration of the trouble he would be put to, you were willing to forgive him whatever back pay he owed you; and when he declared that he owed you no back pay at all, I said you would be willing to forgive him any way on general principles, and think no more about it. Then I ordered beer and cigars

and pronounced the magic syllable '*selbst*,' and in the end he appeared quite reconciled."

"Nonsense. Be serious. What did you say?"

"I *am* serious. That is what I said precisely."

"What, you—oh come, you can't be in earnest."

"But I assure you I am in earnest, never was more in earnest in my life. You don't really imagine that I am going to let you 'stand and wait' any longer, do you?"

"I don't very clearly see how you are going to prevent it. I have my livelihood to earn. I can't afford to throw up my employment in the cavalier manner you propose. It's ridiculous."

"I can prevent it and I will prevent it. How? By the power of friendship, by appealing to your heart and to your reason. As for your livelihood, I have found you a new occupation, one more befitting your character. Henceforward you are to be a private secretary."

"Whose private secretary?"

"Never mind whose—or rather, you will learn

whose, presently. First, accustom your mind to the abstract idea."

"Really, Merivale, you are outrageous. I don't know why I'm not indignant. You meddle with my affairs as if they were your own. You have no right to do so. And yet I am not angry. I must be totally devoid of spunk. But nevertheless I shan't abide by your proceedings. As soon as I am dressed I shall return to the shop and beg Herr Schwartz to take me back."

"I forbid it."

"I am sorry, but I must defy your prohibition. By the way, may I inquire your authority?"

"Certainly. It is every man's authority to restrain a lunatic. Your notion of returning to that wine-shop is downright lunacy. Besides, have I not provided you with new employment?"

"But it is a sort of employment which I don't wish to undertake. I prefer work that will leave my mind disengaged. You ought to understand that in my position one has no heart for any but manual labor."

"I think I understand perfectly, better indeed than you yourself. I understand that while the first shock of your grief lasted it was natural for you to take up the first employment that you chanced upon, no matter what it was. But I understand now that it is high time for you to come back to your proper level. An occupation which leaves your mind disengaged is precisely the very worst you could have. With all appreciation of the magnitude of your bereavement, and with all reverence for your fidelity to your betrothed, I say that it is wrong of you to brood over your troubles. I am not brute enough to advise you to court oblivion; but a grief loses its dignity, becomes a species of egotism, by constantly brooding over it. It is our duty in this world to accept the inevitable with the best grace possible, and to make ourselves as comfortable as under the circumstances we can. But over and above that consideration there is this, that no man has a right to do work that is unworthy of him. It degrades himself and it robs society. Every man is bound to do his best work, to accomplish his highest usefulness. What would

you say of a Newton who had abandoned mathematics to drive a plow? You are as much subject to the general moral law as the rest of us. You were sent into this world to contribute your quota to the sum of human happiness; and your art was permitted you only on the condition that you should cultivate it for the benefit of your fellow creatures. And yet, you propose to do the business of a common waiter in a wretched little *brasserie*. Now, I won't urge you to return to music forthwith, because I know you suffer too keenly while you are playing. But I will say: Remember that you are a gentleman and that you are actually stealing from society by doing that which your inferiors could do as well. For the present, accept the situation of private secretary that I have procured for you. It will be a stepping-stone toward your proper place.—You see, I can be a preacher on occasions."

"And your sermon, I confess, is a wholesome one."

"Then you will consider the secretaryship?"

"I will consider whatever you wish me to. I will be guided by your common sense."

"Good! Now get up and dress."

He left the room. As I dressed I thought over the sermon he had preached. I could not gainsay its truth. Yet on the other hand I could not contemplate a changed mode of life without flinching. Two years of moral illness had undermined my moral courage. I wondered who my new employer was to be. I dreaded meeting him not a little. Thinking over the confidences of the night, I experienced no regret. Indeed I was glad to realize that I was no longer altogether alone in the world. Merivale had inspired me with an enthusiasm.

"What a splendid fellow he is!" I exclaimed. "If he and I could only remain together I believe I should find my life worth living. It is marvelous, the faculty he has for making me forget myself. I suppose it is due to his animal spirits, his healthy temperament. He is as vigorous and bracing as a whiff of the west wind full in one's face."

I had never had a friend before. I relished my first taste of friendship.

Meantime I was preparing my toilet. In the midst of it Merivale came into the room.

"I suppose you know who your future master is to be?" he asked.

"No—how should I know?"

"Oh, you obtuse blockhead! You ——"

"It isn't—you don't mean to say—" I began, a suspicion of the truth dawning upon me.

"Exactly! That is the precise sum and substance of what I mean to say. I mean to say that I'm in need of somebody to help me in certain work that I'm doing. The need is a real one, not an artificial one trumped up for the occasion. I have plenty of cash and am ready to pay what is just for my assistant's time. You on the other hand are looking about for a means of subsistence. At the same time, luckily, you are just the person to suit my purpose. Hence, as a pure matter of business, I say, Shall we strike a bargain? You are going to be sensible and answer, Yes. Wherefore it only remains for me to explain the nature of the work and thus to convince you that you are not going to draw the salary of a sinecure."

"If this is really true," I said, "I can't help telling you that nothing could make me hap-

pier. If I can really be of service to you, and if we can really arrange to keep as closely together as such work would bring us, why, my contentment will be greater than I can say."

"Then come into the next room and judge for yourself."

We passed into the sitting-room. Merivale drew up to a table near the window and taking a pen in his hand said, "Look."

He tried the pen's nib upon the nail of his thumb, dipped it into an inkstand, and applied it to a blank sheet of paper. Then his fingers began to work laboriously to and fro, with the result of tracing a scarcely legible scrawl. One could, however, by dint of taxing the imagination, make out these words: "Good friend, to end all doubt about the present matter, learn by this that a penman's palsy shakes my fist, and furthermore, that I inherit a lamentable tendency to gout in the wrist."

"Scrivener's palsy and gout combined," he added verbally, "and yet I am going to publish a volume of poems in the spring. They're all down on paper, but no one can decipher them except myself; and if I should be carried

off some day unexpectedly, think what the world would lose! My idea is to dictate them to you. We will work from nine till one every day, and devote the rest of our time to relaxation."

"But you take my handwriting for granted," I interposed.

"I think I am safe in doing so," he replied. "But give me a sample."

I wrote off a few words.

"Capital!" was his comment. "Now about the compensation."

I had to haggle with my generous friend and to beat him down half of his original offer. My stipend settled, "I admit," said he, "that I am ravenously hungry. Suppose we dine?"

We adjourned to Moretti's. During the dinner we discussed our future. He said he was constantly writing new matter and therefore our contract would not terminate with the completion of the particular MS. in question. "Ah, what good times we are going to enjoy!" he cried. "We are perfectly companionable! There is nothing so satisfactory, nothing so productive of *bien être*, as friendship, after all."

Dinner over, we strolled arm in arm through the streets. For the first time in two years I began to feel that the world was not quite a ruin. At home we talked till late into the night. And when I went to bed it was to lie awake for hours and hours, congratulating myself upon my newly discovered friend.

IX.

ON the morrow morning our régime was inaugurated: and thenceforward we kept it up regularly. From nine till one I wrote at his dictation. The task was by no means irksome. I enjoyed my friend's poetry: and besides, we varied the business with frequent interruptions for conversation and cigarettes. Merivale taught me to smoke—a vice, if it be a vice, from which I have since derived no little solace. At one o'clock our luncheon was served up to us by the lady of the house: and the remainder of the day we employed as best suited our fancy. Sometimes we would take turns at reading aloud. In this way we read much of Browning and Rossetti, two poets till then total strangers to me. Sometimes we would saunter about the lower quarters of the city. Merivale never tired of the glimpses these excursions afforded into the life of the common people. He maintained that New York was the most

picturesque city in the world, "thanks," he said, "to the presence of your people, the Jews." Sometimes we would visit the picture galleries, where my friend initiated me into the enjoyment of a new art. Musician-like, I had theretofore cared little and understood nothing about painting. Merivale was fond of quoting the German dictum, "*Das Sehen muss gelernt sein!*" —it was all the German he knew—and now he taught me to see.

I was in precisely the mood to appreciate this altered mode of existence to the utmost. At Merivale's touch the pain that for two years had been as a lump in my throat was dissolved and diffused, tinging my life with melancholy instead of consuming it with sullen, unremitting fever.

"The scowl," declared my friend, "the scowl is merging into a smile of sadness. 'Tis a hopeful sign. By and by your cure will be established. You have had a cancer, as it were. We have succeeded in scattering the virus through the system. Now we will proceed to its total eradication. I don't know whether that is the course medical men in general

pursue: but it sounds plausible, and I'm sure it's the proper one for the present instance. Of course I don't expect you ever to rejoice in that unalloyed buoyancy of spirits which distinguishes your servant: but you will become cheerful and contented; and the Italians say, 'Whoso is contented is happy.'"

It seemed as if his predictions were being verified. Though at no time did I cease to think of Veronika, though at no time did I become insensible of the loss I had sustained, still the fact was that I commenced to take an interest in what went on around me, commenced in a certain sense to extract pleasure from my circumstances.

"You have been a dreadful egotist," said Merivale, "profoundly self-absorbed. It was inevitable that you should be for a while. But there is no excuse for you to be so any longer. A purely selfish sorrow is as much a self-indulgence as a purely selfish joy, and has as little dignity. It dwarfs, enervates, demoralizes the soul: a platitude which you would do well to memorize."

At first I had hesitated to try a second

experiment with the violin: yet the very motive of my hesitancy—namely, the recollection of how my feelings had got the best of me the last time—acted also as a temptation. One day while Merivale was absent I tuned his Stradivari, and with much the sensation of a fledgling launched upon a perilous and uncertain flight, let my right arm have its way. The result was encouraging. I determined that henceforward I should practice regularly. The music brought me near to Veronika, and now I could endure this nearness without quailing. Though it was by no means destitute of pain, somehow the very pain was a luxury. Henceforth not a day passed without my dedicating several hours to the violin. Merivale, as he had put it, "scraped a little." He had put it too modestly. He had already learned to read with remarkable facility; and instruction profited him to such a degree that he was soon able to sustain a very accurate second. So when we were at loss for another occupation we would while the hours away with Schubert's songs.

We spent most of our evenings in-doors, chat-

ting at the fireside. Sometimes Merivale would take himself off to pay a visit in the town. Then I would invariably fall to marveling at the change he had wrought in my life. "It is certain," I said, "that Destiny holds some happiness still in store for you." I was mistaken. Destiny was simply granting me a momentary respite—drawing off, preparatory to delivering her final culminating blow.

One night Merivale came home late. I, indeed, had already gone to bed. He roused me by lighting the gas and crying, "Wake up, wake up; I have something of the utmost importance to communicate."

"Is the house afire?" I demanded, startled.

"No; the house is all right. But rub your eyes and open your ears. Do you know Dr. Rodolph?"

"The musical director?"

"The same."

"Of course I know him by reputation. Do you mean personally? Why do you ask?"

"Because—but that's the point. First you must hear my story. It's the greatest stroke of luck that mortal ever had."

"Well, go ahead."

"I'm going ahead as rapidly as I can; only I'm so excited I hardly know where to begin. I've actually run on foot all the way home. I couldn't wait for the horse-car, I was in such a hurry to announce your good fortune. I'm rather out of breath."

"Take your time, then. I possess my soul in patience."

"Well, here's the amount of it.—You see, Dr. Rodolph is a friend of mine, and this evening I thought I would call upon him. The thought proved to be a happy one, a veritable inspiration. I arrived just in the nick of time. We hadn't more than seated ourselves in the drawing-room when the door-bell rang. Martha, the doctor's daughter, went to answer it; and presently back she came bearing a note for her father. The doctor took it and asked permission to read it and broke it open. You know what a nervous little man he is. Well, the next moment he began to grow red, and his nostrils dilated, and his eyes flashed fire, and then he crumpled up the paper and stamped his foot and uttered a tremendous imprecation."

"Oh, pray, don't stop," I said, as he paused for breath. "Your narrative becomes thrilling."

"Well, sir," resumed Merivale, "I got quite alarmed. I rushed up to the doctor's side and 'For mercy's sake, what's the matter—no bad news, I hope," said I. 'Bad news?' says he, 'I should think it was bad news,' giving his mane a toss. 'To-day is Friday, isn't it? To-day we had our public rehearsal. To-morrow night we have our concert. Good. Well, now at the eleventh hour what happens? Why, the soloist sends word that "a sudden indisposition will make it impossible for him to keep his engagement." Ugh! I hope it is an apoplexy, but I'm afraid it's nothing more nor less than rum. The advertisements are all in the papers; the programme is arranged on the assumption that he is to play; and now, late as it is, I shall have to start out in search of a substitute.' 'Hold on a minute, doctor,' said I. 'What instrument did your soloist intend to play?' 'The violin,' says the doctor. 'Hurrah!' I rejoined, 'then you need seek no further!' 'What do you mean?' asked he. 'This,' said I, 'that I will supply a substitute who can take the wind all out

of your delinquent's sails.' The doctor raised his eyebrows. 'Nonsense,' he said. 'It isn't nonsense,' I replied, and thereupon I told him about you—that is about your wonderful skill as a fiddler. Well, of course the doctor was disinclined to believe in you; said that excellence was not enough; the public would tolerate mere excellence in a singer or in a pianist, but when it came to violin solos, the public demanded something superlative or nothing at all; it wasn't possible that you could be up to the mark, because he had never heard of you. Of course, if I said so, he had no doubt that you were a good musician, but he had twenty good musicians in his orchestra. A good musician wasn't enough.—But I didn't mean to be turned aside by this sort of obstacle. I insisted. I said I had heard Joachim and all the best players on the other side, and that you were able to give them lessons. The doctor pooh-poohed me. 'Don't,' he said, 'don't damage your friend's chances by exaggeration. I should be only too much pleased if he should turn out to be a competent man; but you add to my incredulity when you measure him with

a giant like Joachim. At any rate, I am willing to give him a trial. Bring him here to-morrow morning.' So to-morrow morning, bright and early, we will call upon the doctor, and—and your fortune's made!"

It required no little strength of mind to answer Merivale as I now had to.

"You're awfully kind, old boy," I said. "It's extremely hard to be obliged to say no. But really, you don't understand the level of violin playing which a soloist must come up to. And you don't understand either what a mediocre executant I am. My technique is such that I could barely pass muster among the second violinists in Doctor Rodolph's orchestra. It would be the height of effrontery for me to present myself before him as a would-be soloist."

"That is a matter for the doctor, and not for you, to decide. No man can correctly estimate his own powers: you not more than the rest. All I say is, come with me to call upon him to-morrow morning and leave the consequences to his judgment."

"You would not submit me to the humilia-

tion of such a trial. After the extravagances you have uttered concerning me, to show myself in my own humble colors—the drop would be too great. But I may as well be entirely candid. There are other reasons, final ones. I may as well say right out that it will never be possible for me to play my violin anywhere except here, between you and me: you know why."

The light faded from Merivale's eyes.

"Oh, don't say that," he pleaded. "After the trouble I've taken, and after the promise I've made, and after the pleasure I've had in picturing your delight, don't say you won't even go to see the Doctor and give him a specimen. Don't disappoint a fellow like that."

I stuck out obdurately. Merivale shifted from the attitude of one who begs a favor to that of one who imposes a duty.

"Come," he cried, "it is simply the old egotism reasserting itself. You won't play, forsooth, because it doesn't suit your humor. That, I say, is egotism of the worst sort. You —positively, you make me ashamed for you. It is the part of a man to perform his task man-

fully. What right have you, I'd like to know, what right have you to hide your light under a bushel, more than another? Simply because the practice of your art entails pain upon you, are you justified in resting idle? Why, all great work entails pain upon the worker. Raphael never would have painted his pictures, Dante never would have written his Inferno, women would never bring children into the world, if the dread of pain were sufficient to subdue courage and the sense of obligation. It is the pain which makes the endeavor heroic. I have all due respect for your feelings, Lexow; but I respect them only in so far as I believe that you are able to master them. When I see them get the upper hand and sap your manhood, then I counsel you to a serious battle with them. The excuse you offer for not wishing to play to-morrow night is a puny excuse. I will have none of it. To-morrow morning you will go with me to Doctor Rodolph's: and if after this homily you persist in your refusal—well, you'll know my opinion of you."

Merivale would not listen to my protests. He

got into bed and said, "Good-night. Go to sleep. No use for you to talk. I'm deaf. I'm implacable also; and to-morrow morning I shall lead you to the slaughter. Prepare to trot along becomingly at my side, lambkin. Good-night."

My efforts to beg off next morning were ineffectual.

"If you desire to forfeit my respect entirely," he warned me, "persist in this sort of thing."

I permitted myself to be dragged by the arm through the streets to Doctor Rodolph's house.

The Doctor accorded me a skeptical welcome. Producing a composition quite unfamiliar to me, he bade me read it at sight. I made up my mind to do my best. The doctor sat in an easy chair during the first dozen bars. Then he began to move nervously about the room. Then, before I had half finished, he cried out, "Stop—enough, enough."

Disconcerted, I brought my bow to a standstill and exchanged a forlorn glance with Merivale.

The doctor approached and looked me quizzically over from head to foot. "Where did you study?" he inquired.

"In New York," I answered.

"Have you ever played in public?"

"Not at any large affairs."

"Do you teach?"

"I used to."

"What—what did you say your name was?"

"Lexow."

"Hum, it is odd I haven't heard of you. Have you been in New York long?"

"All my life."

"Oh, yes; you said you studied here. Who were your masters?"

I named them.

The doctor's face had been inscrutable.

Merivale and I had sat on pins during the inquisition. Now the doctor's face lighted up with a genial smile.

"You will do, Mr. Lexow," he said. "I don't know whom to thank the more, you or Mr. Merivale. You have relieved me in a very trying emergency. Your playing is fine, though perhaps a trifle too independent, a trifle too

individual, and the least tone too florid. It is odd, most odd that I should never have heard of you; but we shall all hear of you in the future."

We agreed upon the selections for the evening. I ran them through in the doctor's presence and listened to his suggestions. Then we bade him good-by.

That day was a trying one. It would be bootless to catalogue the conflicting thoughts and emotions that preyed upon me. I practiced my pieces thoroughly. Merivale busied himself procuring what he styled a "rig." The rig consisted of an evening suit and its accessories. He rented one at a costumer's on Union square. As the day drew to a close, I worried more and more. "Brace up," cried Merivale. "Where's your stamina? And here, swallow a glass of brandy."

We waited in the ante-room till it was my turn to go upon the platform.

I was conscious of a glow of light and a sea of faces and a mortal stage-fright, and of little else, when finally I had taken my position. The orchestra played the preliminary bars. I

had to begin. I got through the first phrase and the second. The voice of my instrument reassured me. "After all you will not make a dead failure," I thought, and ventured to lift my eyes. Not two yards distant from me, to my right, among the first violins, sat Mr. Tikulski. His gaze was riveted upon my face.

I had anticipated about every catastrophe that could possibly befall, but strangely enough I had not anticipated this. And it was so sudden, and the emotions it occasioned were so powerful, and I was so nervous and unstrung—well, the floor gave a lurch, like the deck of a vessel in a storm; the lights dashed backward and forward before my sight; a deathly sickness overspread my senses; the accompaniment of the orchestra became harsh and incoherent; my violin dropped with a crash upon the boards; and the next thing I was aware of, I lay at full length on a sofa in the retiring-room, and Merivale was holding a smelling-bottle to my nostrils. I could hear the orchestra beyond the partition industriously winding off the *Tannhäuser* march.

"How do you feel?" asked Merivale, as I opened my eyes.

"I feel as though I should like to annihilate myself," I answered, as memory cleared up. "I have permanently disgraced us both."

"But what was the trouble? You were doing nobly, splendidly, when all of a sudden you collapsed like that," clapping his hands. "The doctor is furious, says it was all my fault."

"No, it wasn't your fault," I hastened to put in. "I should have pulled through after a fashion, only unluckily I caught sight of Tikulski—her uncle, you know—in the orchestra; and, well, I—I suppose—well, you see it was so unexpected that it rather undid me."

"Oh, yes; I understand," said he.

We kept silence all the way home in the carriage.

Next morning, as I entered the sitting-room, Merivale tried to hide a newspaper under his coat.

"Oh, don't bother to do that," I said. "Of course it is all in print?"

Possessing myself of the newspaper, I had the satisfaction of reading a sensational account

of my fiasco. But what I had most dreaded from the quarter of the newspapers had not come to pass. None of them identified me as the Ernest Neuman who, rather more than two years since, had been tried for murder.

X.

MY encounter with Tikulski was bound to have consequences, practical as well as moral. All day Sunday a legion of blue devils were my comrades. Late Monday afternoon I received by the post a letter and a package, each addressed to "E. Lexow, in care of D. Merivale, Esq." The penmanship was the same on both—a stiff European hand which I could not recognize. I began with the letter. It read thus:—

"Mr. E. Lexow,

"Dear Sir:

I should have forwarded this to you before, but not apprised of the alteration of your name, I was unable to discover your address. I dispatch this to the address indicated by Dr. Rodolph, who informs me that you are to be reached through D. Merivale, Esquire, as he is not advised of your private

residence. I found it in a pawn-broking establishment (No. — —— street, kept by one M. Arkush) now more than a year, and purchased it with the intention of restoring it to you, because I suppose that it must be of some value to you as a family memento, and that you would not have disposed of it except needing money. Hoping that this letter may find you in the enjoyment of good health, I am

"Respectfully yours,

"B. TIKULSKI."

What could Tikulski's letter mean? What could "it" be? I puzzled over these questions for a long while before it occurred to me to unseal the package.

There was an outer wrapper of stout brown paper. Beneath this, an inner wrapper of tissue paper. Both removed, I beheld an oval case of red leather, considerably the worse for wear. What did it contain? I pressed the clasp and raised the lid. It contained a miniature painted on ivory, the likeness of a man. The faded colors and the old-fashioned collar and cravat showed that it dated from some years back. But of whom was it a picture?

Why had Tikulski posted it to me? And what did he mean by supposing that I should value it as a family memento and that I would not have parted with it—I, who had never owned it,—"except needing money?" I was thoroughly mystified.

"Merivale," I said, "can you make any thing out of this?"

I tossed him the letter and the portrait.

Presently he muttered, "Pretty good, by Jove."

"Well?" I questioned.

"Well, what?" he returned.

"Well, what do you make of it? What does it mean?"

"Why, that the likeness is striking, what else? Your father, eh?"

"My father? I confess I am in the dark."

"And you have the faculty of dragging me in after you. What are you trying to get at?"

"I am trying to get at Mr. Tikulski's idea. Why should he send me that miniature? Whom does it represent?"

"You don't mean to say that you haven't recognized it?"

"Most certainly I do."

"Man alive, look in the glass.—Here."

Merivale held up the miniature in one hand and a pocket-mirror in the other. As closely as it is possible for one human countenance to resemble another, the face of the picture resembled my reflection in the glass.

"Are you satisfied?" demanded Merivale.—"Why, what ails you?" he continued presently, as I did not answer. "You look as if you had seen a ghost. Are you ill?"

"It has caused me quite a turn," I replied. "It must indeed be a portrait of my father. But do you know—wait—let me tell you something."

What I told Merivale I shall have also to tell the reader.

I could remember neither of my parents. As a child, I had lived in a dark old house with a good old rabbi and his wife—Dr. and Mrs. Hirsch. I had never stopped to ask whether or not they were my father and mother until I was eleven or twelve years of age. Then, the question having been suggested by a school-

mate, I had said, "Dr. Lesser"—Lesser being the rabbi's given name—"are you my father?" To which the doctor, beaming at me over the rim of his spectacles, had responded, "No, my child: you are an orphan."—"An orphan? That means?" I pursued. "That your papa and mamma are dead," said he.—"Have they been dead long?" I asked indifferently. "Ever since you were the tiniest little tot," he replied. And thereupon, as the subject did not prove especially interesting, I had let it drop.

Time went on. I was perfectly contented. The doctor and his wife were kindness personified. The present occupied me so pleasantly that I forgot to be curious about the past. But at length, when I was fifteen, the question of my parentage was again brought to my mind—this time by a lad with whom I had had a quarrel and who as a parting thrust had inquired significantly whether I knew the definition of the Hebrew noun *Mamzer*. Highly incensed, I ran home and burst into the doctor's study. "Doctor," I demanded, without ceremony, "am I a *Mamzer?*"—"What a notion! Of course you are not," replied the rabbi.—"Then," I con-

tinued, "what am I? Tell me all about my father and mother."

The doctor said there was nothing to tell except that my mother had died when I was less than two years old, and my father not a great while after her. They had been members of his (the doctor's) congregation; and rather than see me sent to an orphan asylum, he and his wife had taken me to live with them.—"But what sort of people were they, my parents?" I insisted. "Give me some particulars about them."—"They were very respectable, and by their neighbors generally esteemed well off. Your father had been a merchant; but for the last year his health was such as to confine him to his bedroom. It was quite a surprise to every body to find on his death that very little property was left. That little was gobbled up by his creditors. So that you have no legacy to expect except ——" "Except?" I queried as the doctor hesitated. "There is no exception. You have no legacy to expect at all."—"But," I resumed, "had my parents no relations? Have I no uncles or aunts? Am I altogether without kindred?"—"So far as I know, you are.

Your father came originally from Breslau. It is possible that he had relatives there; but he had none in this country—at least I never heard him speak of any. He was a good man, a pious man. It was sad that he should die so young, but it was the will of *Adonai*."—"And my mother, had she no brother or sister?"—"About your mother I can tell you very little. She came from Savannah. Whether she has connections there still, I can not say."—"Doctor," I asked, after a moment's silence, "what did you mean by that 'except' you used a while ago, speaking of legacies?" "I meant nothing. I was thinking of a few family relics, papers and what-not, which you are to receive when you become of age."—"Why not till then?"—"No reason, save that such was your father's wish, expressed on his death-bed. He said, 'Don't let my son have these until he is grown to be a man.'"—"Can you tell me definitely what they are?"—"I can not. I have never seen them. They are locked up in a box; and the box I am not at liberty to open."—"Doctor, what was my mother's maiden-name?" "Bertha, Bertha Lexow."—"Did

you marry her and my father?" "Oh, no; they were married in the South at Savannah. I think they had been married about five years when your father died."—I went on quizzing the doctor until he declined to answer another question. "Go away, gad-fly," he cried. "You are worse than the inquisition."

In my eighteenth year the doctor died suddenly, having survived his wife by a six-month only. He was stricken down by paralysis while intoning the *Kadesh* song in the synagogue. In him I lost my only friend. I had loved him precisely as though he had been my father. His death was an immense affliction. It took me a long while to gather my wits together and realize my position.

A week or two after the funeral a man came to me and said, "I represent the Public Administrator, charged with settling up Dr. Hirsch's concerns. He leaves nothing except household furniture and a few dollars in bank—all of which goes to his next-of-kin in Germany. You will have to find other quarters. These are to be vacated and the goods sold at auction in a few days."—"Ah," I said, "if you are his

administrator, that reminds me. I beg that you will deliver over the things the doctor had belonging to me—a box containing papers." "Identify your property and prove your title," he replied.

Strangers came and went in and out of the house for several days. But in the inventory which they prepared no such box as the doctor had described was mentioned. Furthermore, a thorough search failed to bring it to light. The auction was held. The last fork was knocked down to the highest bidder. And I had to go about my business with the unpleasant conviction that owing to some slip-up somewhere my inheritance had either been lost or stolen. Gradually I reconciled myself to this idea, concluding that what I already knew about my parents was the most I ever should know; and thus matters had remained ever since.

"But now," I added, my recital wound up, "now perhaps in this miniature I have a clew. It must be a portrait of my father: and very likely it was part of the contents of that box. I suppose, if I were clever, I should see a way of following it up."

"I am consoled," said Merivale, drawing a deep breath.

"Consoled?" I queried.

"Yes, consoled for my obstinacy in making you play at the concert. You see, it was an inspiration after all. If you had not chanced upon Tikulski—what a blood-curdling name! fit for a tragedy villain—if you hadn't chanced upon him as you did, why you never would have received the picture, and so the mystery which envelops my hero's antecedents would never have been dispelled. Now we must go to work in a systematic way."

"Exactly; but how begin?"

"Let me see Tikulski's letter again."—After he had read the letter, "Begin," he said, "by paying a visit to the pawn-shop where he got it. Luckily he had the presence of mind to mention its whereabouts."

"Good," I assented. "But will you go with me?"

"Do you imagine I would allow you to go alone, you unfledged gosling? I shall not only go with you, but by your permission I shall manage the whole transaction. I fancy I surpass you in respect of *savoir faire*."

"It is now past four. Shall we start at once?"

"Yes, of course."

"Don't be too hopeful," he warned me, as we approached the pawnbroker's door. "Most likely we shall run against a dead wall."

The shop was empty. A bell tinkled as we opened the door. In response, a young fellow in his shirt-sleeves emerged from a dark back room.

"Is Mr. Arkush in?" demanded Merivale, with an air of friendliness.

"Do you want to see him personally?" returned the young man, not over politely.

"You have fathomed my purpose," said Merivale with mock gravity.

"What about?"

Merivale drew near to the young man and shielding his mouth with his hand whispered, "Business," accompanying his utterance with a knowing glance.

"Well, you can see me about business," rejoined his interlocutor, surlily.

"Impossible. Here, take my card to Mr. Arkush and say I am pressed."

"Mr. Arkush can't see nobody. He's sick."

"Sick? Ah, indeed?" cried Merivale. "Has he been sick long? I hope it is nothing serious. Pray tell me what the trouble is?"

The young man looked surprised. "Oh, it's only rheumatism," he said. "You ain't a friend of his, are you?"

"Why, my dear fellow, of course I am. By the very nature of his profession Mr. Arkush is the friend of every body; and I am the friend of every friend of mine. Consequently—but the deduction is too obvious. Here, take him my card and say that if he is not too ill I shall hope to be admitted."

"Well, perhaps I'd better," said the young man, reflectively.—"Becky," he called, raising his voice.

Becky appeared.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Rebecca," said Merivale, lifting his hat.

"Mind the shop," said the young man to Becky, and thereat vanished.

"Come this way," he said to us, presently returning.

He conducted us into the cavernous back

room. The atmosphere was heavy with the scent of stale cookery. The walls were lined with shelves, bearing mysterious parcels done up in paper winding-sheets. Under a grimy window at the further end an old man sat in an easy chair, a patch-work quilt infolding his legs. Bald, beardless, with sharply accentuated features and a yellow skin, he looked like a Midas whose magic was beginning to operate upon himself.

"Dear me!" cried Merivale, advancing toward him. "I'm shocked to find you suffering like this, Mr. Arkush. Do the legs give you much pain? You must try petroleum liniment. I'll send you a bottle. They say it's the best remedy in the world.—But tell me, how are you getting on? Do you notice any improvement?"

The old man's face wore a puzzled expression. "What was the business you wanted to see me about?" he inquired.

"Oh, never mind about business till you have quieted my anxiety regarding your health. Besides, are you sure you will be able to attend?"

The mask of Midas betrayed a tendency to smile. "Come, time is money; hurry up," said its owner. He had a strong Jewish accent, thus: "Dime iss money."

"Oh, well," said Merivale, "if you don't think it will disturb you, I'll come to the point. But let me disarm beforehand any suspicion which the nature of my errand may be calculated to inspire. I am *not* a detective. I am *not* on the track of stolen goods. I am simply a private individual desirous of gaining certain information for certain strictly legitimate ends. So you need have no fear of compromising yourself by speaking with entire unreserve. Shall I proceed?"

"My Gott, what are you talking about? Don't make foolishness any longer," exclaimed Mr. Arkush with some degree of vivacity.

"Mr. Arkush," said Merivale in his most solemn tones, "do you remember this?" extracting the miniature from his pocket and handing it to the pawnbroker.

The latter donned a pair of spectacles and holding the picture off at arm's length, scrutinized it in silence.

"Yes, I remember it," he replied finally, "I sold it to a gentleman some time ago. What of it?"

"You did. You sold it about a year ago to a gentleman with a white beard. Recollect?"

"Ah, yes, yes: you are right. He had a white beard. He was also a Jew. We spoke in *Judisch*. I remember."

"By Jove, hasn't Mr. Arkush a wonderful memory?" cried Merivale, turning to me.

"I happen to remember," volunteered Mr. Arkush, unperturbed by the compliment, "because when I put that article into the window I said to myself, 'You won't get no customer for that. What good is it to any one? You made a mistake to lend your money on it. That was a loss.' But the very same day the old gentleman came in and bought it, which was a surprise."

"Ah, I see. Could you tell me, Mr. Arkush, of whom you got it originally—who pledged it with you?"

"*Du lieber Gott!* how should I remember that? It was two years ago already."

"True, but—but your books would show."

"Yes, my books would show the name the person gave."

"Well, will you kindly refer to your books?"

"Ach, you make me much trouble!—Yakub," he called.

The young man came.

Arkush told Yakub to get him the ledger for 18—. It was a ponderous and dingy volume. Yakub held it open while his employer turned the pages, running his finger from the top to the bottom of each. At length the finger reached a stand-still. Mr. Arkush said, "Yes, I have found it. It was pawned with me by a man calling himself Joseph White."

"The date?"

"The 16th January."

"Have you any means of recalling what sort of looking individual Joseph White was? And, by the way, is his residence given?"

"'Residence, Harlem,' it says. That's all. How should I remember his looks?"

"Of course—you see so many people in the course of a year, it is not wonderful that you should forget.—But tell me, did White put any thing else in pawn that day?"

"No, sir; nothing else."

"He simply pawned this one article and went away; that's all?"

"That's all."

"Hum!"

Merivale reflected. At length he resumed. "But at any other time—that is, does White's name appear on your ledger under any other date?"

"Do you expect me to read through the book?" inquired Arkush, with the tone of protestation. "That is too much."

"I'm awfully sorry to annoy you, but this information I am seeking is of such great importance—you understand—it's worth a consideration."

"Oh, well, that's different," said Arkush. "What will you give?"

"I'll give twenty-five cents for each month that you go over—is it enough?"

"Here, Yakub," cried Arkush. "Run back from January 16th, and see if you find the name of Joseph White again."

Yakub carried the ledger to a desk hard by, and began his task.

"Do you smoke?" Merivale asked the old man, offering him a cigar. Presently the air became blue with aromatic vapor.

"Here you are!" called Yakub from his stool. He proceeded to read aloud, "'December 7th —one onyx seal ring—amount, one dollar and a quarter—to Joseph White—residence, Leonard street—ticket-number, 15,672.—Same date—one ornamented wooden box—amount, fifteen cents—to Joseph White—residence, as above—ticket-number, 15,673.'"

"Keep still," said Merivale in an aside, as he saw my lips open. "I'll do the talking.—I'm infinitely obliged to you, Mr. Arkush. Now, if I may trespass just a little further upon your indulgence, can you tell me whether you still have either of those articles in stock? If so, I should be glad to see them—with a view to purchasing, of course."

"Look, Yakub," said Arkush. "Was those goods redeemed?"

Yakub returned the ledger to the shelf whence he had taken it, and produced another book of similar proportions in its stead. Presently he said, "Number 15,672, sold August 20, 18—; Number 15,673—see profit and loss."

"Number 15,672 was the ring, was it not?" asked Merivale. "Number 15,673 is referred to the account of profit and loss—will you kindly turn to it under that head, Mr. Yakub?"

Yakub possessed himself of a third volume, and in due time read, "'Number 15,673—July, 18—, given to R.—Amount of loss, fifteen cents.'"

"Let me see that entry," said Arkush.

After he had scrutinized it, "Oh yes," he continued, "I recollect. White was a colored man. I recollect all about it. That ring and that box were the first things he brought here; that picture was the last. I happen to recollect because I gave that box to my daughter, Rebecca, instead of offering it for sale."

"Ah," said Merivale, "then I suppose Miss Rebecca has it still. Could she be persuaded to show it to us?"

"I don't know. I will ask her."

He sent Yakub into the front room with instructions for Rebecca to present herself.

On her arrival, they held a brief conference together in *Judisch*. Then Rebecca went away,

and Arkush said to us, "Yes, she has got it yet. She has gone to fetch it."

During her absence Merivale resumed, "You are quite sure that it is useless to go further back in your books—that the name of White doesn't occur in any other place?"

"Oh, yes; I am sure. I recollect perfectly. He was a colored man. He only came twice."

"I notice that on one occasion his address is given as Harlem, on another as Leonard street. How is that?"

"How do I know? Maybe he moved. Maybe neither address was his true one. These people very often give false names and addresses."

"I suppose they do," Merivale assented, and thereafter held his peace, chewing his nether lip as his habit was when engrossed in thought.

For my part I could not see that we had made much progress. I was beginning to get impatient.

Becky reappeared, bearing the box.

The box was about ten inches square by four or five in depth. It was empty. Merivale

did not allow me to examine it. "Wait," he said, as I reached out my hand to take it.

"Would you mind very much parting with this box, Miss Arkush?" he asked, fixing a pair of languishing eyes upon Rebecca's face.

"What will you give me for it?" the business-like young lady inquired.

"What will you accept?"

"What's it worth, father?"

"That box is worth two dollars any how," replied the shameless old usurer, regardless of the fact that we knew to a mill what he had paid for it.

"Then certainly this will be enough," said Merivale, and he slipped a five-dollar gold piece into Rebecca's palm. Then he settled with Arkush, bestowed a gratuity upon Yakub, and bidding an affable good-by to every body, led me out through the shop into the street.

"Well," I said, "we have run against the dead wall that you foresaw."

"So it appears," said he.

"The picture was pawned by a colored man only two years ago—that is, four-and-twenty years after my father's death. We

don't know of any means by which to reach that colored man; but even if we did—"

"It would be a forlorn hope."

"Exactly. So that we stand just as we did before we left home, do we not? Except that you are by five dollars a poorer man. It was sheer extravagance, your purchasing that box. I suppose your imagination connected it with *the* box—the box that Dr. Hirsch told me of. But the probabilities are overwhelmingly against that contingency. Then, why did you waste your money, buying it? Intrinsically, it isn't worth carrying away."

"Hush, hush," interposed my friend. "Don't talk to me. I have an idea—an idea for a story—àpropos of Arkush and his daughter. Bless me with silence until I have meditated it to my soul's satisfaction."

At home he began, "Yes, as you have said, our interview with Arkush was not fruitful. We have simply learned the name—or the assumed name—of the last owner of your father's picture—for, that it is your father's picture I have no sort of doubt. The next step would logically be to find Mr. White and question

him. It is possible that a tempting advertisement in the newspaper might fetch him; but it is not probable. Very likely, he would never see it. Very likely, he is a thief, and even if he did see it, would be restrained by caution from replying to it. So that the outlook is not hopeful. As for this box being *the* box—why, the hypothesis is absurd. It was not on that supposition that I bought it. And even if it were *the* box, it would be of little consequence, empty as it is. I trust you are not too much disappointed."

"By no means. I have managed to live for a considerable number of years in my present state of ignorance about my vanished legacy, and doubtless I shall pull through a few years more. Only, of course I was bound to follow the clew that this picture seemed to furnish, as far as it would lead; and having done so I am contented. I was not very hopeful when we started out, wherefore I am not very disappointed at the result. Let's think no more about it."

"Good! Your mind is imbued with a sound philosophy. But now—"

"But now, tell me why in the name of common sense you invested five dollars in that box?"

"Precisely what I was driving at. Now you are going to have a practical illustration of the value of experience."

He took the box up from the table where he had laid it.

"You think that 'intrinsically, this wasn't worth carrying away,' and that my expenditure of half an eagle was a reckless waste of good material. To an inexperienced observer your view would certainly seem the correct one. The box is scarcely beautiful. The wood is oak. The metal with which its surface is so profusely ornamented looks like copper. The thing as a whole appears to have been designed for a cheapish jewel-case, now in the last stage of decrepitude. Do I express your sentiments?"

"Eloquently and with precision."

"But you, my dear Lexow, are not a connoisseur. I, as chance would have it, have seen a box of this description before; saw one in France, the property of a lady of high degree; and, strange as it may seem, I don't believe a

hundred bright gold pieces such as the one I gave Rebecca, could have induced my French lady friend to part with it. Guess why."

"Why? Oh, I suppose it had certain associations that made her want to keep it. We often prize things quite irrespective of their market value. But go on: don't be so roundabout."

"Well, the reason—at least one reason—for her setting such store by the box in question—which, I must remind you, was the very duplicate of the one we have here—the reason, I say, was that she knew enough about such matters to recognize that box for a specimen of cinque-cento—*a specimen of cinque-cento!* Now do you begin to realize that the paltry five dollars were not exorbitant?"

"Oh, from the standpoint of an antiquary, an amateur of bric-a-brac, I suppose it was not."

"Excellent! No, sir; on the contrary, it was an immense bargain, a thorough-going stroke of luck. But now please take the box into your own hands, treat it gingerly, inspect it carefully, and tell me whether you remark any thing extraordinary about it."

"Nothing, except that it is extraordinarily ugly and doesn't speak well for cinque-cento," I replied, after the requisite examination.

"Another proof that *das Sehen muss gelernt sein!* Here, I will enlighten you.—You behold this metal work which a moment since we disposed of as copper; learn that it is bronze; and not cast bronze, either, but wrought bronze, bronze shaped with hammer and chisel. Look closely at it; note the forms into which it has been modeled. See these roses, these lilies, these lotus leaves; see how exquisitely they are fashioned; see how they are massed together into a harmonious *ensemble.* Now hold it close to your eyes: see—do you see?—this serpent twined among the flowers! The artist must have worked from life—the very texture of the skin is reproduced—it makes one shudder."

"Yes," I said, "I admit it is a fine piece of work."

"But we have not yet exhausted the list of its virtues by any means. Now open it and look at the interior."

"I see nothing remarkable about the interior," I replied, "nothing but bare wood."

"That is all *you* see; but watch."

He applied the point of a pencil to one of the series of nail-heads with which the top of the lid was studded. It appeared to sink a hair's-breadth into the wood. Thereat the lower surface of the lid dropped down, disclosing a hollow space between it and the upper.—"A double cover," he said, "a place for hiding things and—hello! it isn't empty!"

No, it wasn't empty. It contained a large, square envelope. Merivale hastily made a grab for it, and crossed over to the gas-fixture. "Have we stumbled upon a romance?" he cried. Holding it up to the light, presently he said: "Come hither, Lexow. The writing is German script. I can't read it. Come and help."

He put the envelope into my hands. I ran my eyes over the writing. Next moment the envelope fluttered to the floor. I grasped Merivale's arm to support myself. My breath became short and quick. "I was not prepared for this," I gasped.

"For what? What is the trouble?" he asked.

I sank into a chair. Merivale picked up the

envelope and studied it intently. "I can make nothing out of it," he said.

"Give it to me—I will read it to you," I rejoined.

This is what I read:—

"To be delivered to my son, Ernest Neuman, upon his attaining the age of one-and-twenty years. Let there be no failure, as the will of a dying man is honored.—To my son: Open and read on your twenty-first birthday. Be alone when you read.—Your father, Ernest Neuman."

Neither of us broke silence for some minutes afterward.

At last, "I guess I'd better clear out," said Merivale. "This is considerably more than we had bargained for. I suppose you'd like to be alone. I'll remain in the next room. Call, if you want me."

"Yes," I returned, "I may as well read it at once. But do you know—it's quite natural, doubtless—I really dread opening it? Who can tell what its contents may be? Who can tell what information it may convey, to the detriment of that ignorance which is bliss? Who

can tell what duty it may impose—what change it may make necessary in my mode of life? I—I am really afraid of it. The superscription is not reassuring—and then, this strange accident by which it has reached its destination after so many years! It is like a fatality."

"It is inevitable that you should feel this way. The suddenness of the business was enough to shatter your self-possession. At the same time you would best not delay about reading it. You won't be able to rest until you've done so, you know.—Yes, indeed, it is like a fatality—like an incident in a novel—one of those happenings that we never expect to see occur in real life. I'll wait in the next room till you call."

My heart stood still as I broke the seal. Four double sheets of thin glazed paper, covered with minute German script. The ink was faded, and there were a good many blots and interlineations; so that it was only by dint of straining my eyesight to the utmost that I could decipher my father's message. But screwing up my courage, I attacked it, nor did I pause till I had read the last word.

XI.

HERE is a translation :—

"In the name of God, Amen!

"To my son :

"You are a little less than two years old ; I, your father, am dying. I shall be dead before your birthday. That will be the 6th *Cheshvan*. It is now the 2nd *Ellul*. The physician gives me till some time in *Tishri* to keep possession of my faculties. I am dying before my time. I have something yet to accomplish in this world. " has willed that it be accomplished. He has willed that you accomplish it in my stead. I am in my bed as I write this, in the bed from which I shall not rise again. Through the open door of my room I can hear you crowing in your nurse's arms. Ah, would that you could understand by word of mouth from me now, what I am compelled to write. There is so much that a man can not but forget to put

down, when he is writing. Yet " will illumine my mind and strengthen my trembling fingers. " will not allow me to forget any thing that is essential. When this is completed, I shall put it into safe hands, that it may be delivered to you at the proper time. I have no fear. I am sure it will reach you. It will reach you sooner or later, though all men conspire to the contrary. " has promised it. He will render this writing indelible, this paper indestructible. He will guide this to you, even as He guides the river to the sea, the star to the zenith. Blessed be the name of " forever.

"My son, before you read further, cover your head and pray. Pray to " for strength. Pray that the will of your father may be done. Pray that you may be directed aright for the fulfillment of this errand of justice with which I charge you.

"You have prayed. I also have laid aside my pen for a moment, and, summoning your nurse to bring you to my bedside, have prayed with my hand upon your head. " will be with you as you read. Read on.

"My son, you do not, you will never know

your mother. You do not love her; you hear not the sound of her voice; it is forbidden you to gaze into the lustrous depths of her eyes. Ah, my son, you little guess how much you lost when you lost your mother. But you must learn the truth.

"Your mother was younger than I by seven years. I am thirty. Your mother would be three-and-twenty had she lived. She was nineteen when I married her. It was in Savannah, Georgia, going on five years ago. Ah, my Ernest, I can not tell you how beautiful your mother appeared to me when I saw her first. I can not tell you with what great love I loved her. Suppose that you had never seen a stone more precious than a pebble such as may be picked up in our back garden, and that all at once a diamond were shown to you, a diamond of the purest water: would you not distrust your eyes, crying, 'Ah, so fine, so wonderful! Can it be?'—So was it when I saw your mother. I had seen pebbles innumerable, ay, and mock diamonds too. She was the first true diamond I had ever seen. I loved her at the first glance.—How long, after the sun has risen,

does it take the waters of the earth to sparkle with the sunlight? So long it took my heart to love, after my eyes for the first time had met your mother's. But how much I loved her, how every drop of my life was sucked up and absorbed into my love of her, it would be useless for me to try to make you understand.

"And yet, loving her as I did, I hesitated to bespeak her for my wife. Why?

"In my eighteenth year my own father—your grandfather, of holy memory—had died. On his death-bed he called me to him. He said: 'When you have become a man you will meet many women. To one of them your heart will go out in love. You will desire her for your wife. But I say to you here on my death-bed, beware! Do not marry, though your love be greater than your life.

"'In the fourth generation back of me our ancestor was betrayed by the wife of his choice. So great was his hatred of her on this account, that he wished his seed, contaminated as it was by having taken root in her womb, to become extinct. Therefore he forbade his son to marry. And to this prohibition he attached a penalty.

If, in defiance of his wish, his son should take unto himself a woman, then should he too taste the bitterness of infidelity within the household, then should he too be betrayed and dishonored by his wife. And this penalty he made to extend to the seventh and eighth generations. Whosoever of his progeny should enter into the wedded state should enter by the same step into the antechamber of hell.

"'But his son laughed as he listened; and within two years he was married. But within two years also the laughter froze upon his lips. For behold, the curse of his father had come to pass!

"'Thus ever since. Each of our ancestors, despite his father's caution, has taken a wife. He has been betrayed and dishonored by her even as I have been betrayed and dishonored by your mother. He has repeated to his own son the family malediction even as I am now repeating it to you.—Let that malediction then go down into the grave with me. Do not marry, as you wish for peace now and hereafter.'

"It was in this wise that on his death-bed

my father had spoken to me. I remembered his words when I found that I had begun to love a woman. It was for this reason that I hesitated to ask your mother to become my wife.

"Ah, but, my son, of what avail is hesitation at such a moment?—when you are gazing into the eyes of the woman you love? With sails set and a strong wind behind it, can the ship hesitate to speed across the sea? Thrust into a bed of live coals, can the wood hesitate to kindle and burn? With the sun beating hot upon the earth above it, can the seed hesitate to sprout and send forth rootlets? How long then could I, with the light of your mother's face shining upon my pathway, how long could I hesitate to say, 'I love you. Be my wife'?—We were married.

"You, my son, will never know how happy it is possible for a man to be. A woman such as your mother is born only once in all time. You will never meet with her like. You will never know the supreme joy of having her for your wife. Her breath was sweeter than the fragrance of the sweetest flower. The song of

the nightingale was less musical than her simplest word. All the light of heaven was eclipsed by the light that glowed far down in her eyes. Her presence at my side was a foretaste of paradise. Only to take her hand into my own and stroke its warm, satiny skin, was an ecstasy which I can not describe, which I can not remember even at this extreme moment without a quickening of the pulse. For three, yes, for four years after our marriage we were so happy that we cried each morning and each evening at our prayers, 'Lord, what have we done to merit such happiness?'—I, my son, laughed as I recalled the dying words of my father. 'The family curse in my case,' I said, 'has gone astray. I have no fear.'—Alas! I took too much for granted. I congratulated myself too soon. Our happiness was doomed to be burst like a bubble at a touch. The family curse had perhaps gone astray for a little while: it was bound to find its way back before the end. The will of our ancestor could not be thwarted.

"The first three years of our married life we passed at Savannah, dwelling with the parents of your mother. There you were born—as it

seemed, in order to consummate and seal with the seal of " our perfect joy. Then, when you were still but three months old, it became necessary that I should return and take up my residence again in New York. We were not sorry to come to New York.

"Nicholas had been my closest friend for many years. Boys together at Breslau, we had crossed the sea together, and had started our new life together here in America. Before our wedding I had described Nicholas to your mother, saying, 'Him also must you love;' and to Nicholas I had written, bidding him include my wife in his love of me.—This was why we were not sorry to leave Savannah and come to New York: because Nicholas was here, because we wanted to be near to our best friend.—Nicholas met us as we disembarked from the sailing vessel that had brought us hither. It made my heart warm to greet my old comrade and to present to him my wife and my son.

"I was a true friend to Nicholas. After your mother and you, he was first in my heart. I would have shared with him my last drop of water, my last crumb of bread; and he, I be-

lieved, would have done the same by me. My purse was always open for Nicholas to put in his hand and take out what he would, even to the last penny. I thought Nicholas was pure gold. I trusted him as I trusted myself. I said to your mother, 'No evil can betide you so long as Nicholas is alive. If any thing should happen to me, in him you will have a brother, in him our Ernest will have a second father.' It gave me a sense of perfect security, made me feel that the strength of my own right arm was doubled, the fact that Nicholas was my friend.

"Good. After my return to New York the intimacy between Nicholas and myself increased. He was constantly at our house. We were always glad to see him. A place was always laid for him at our table; it made our hearts light to have him with us, so bright, so gay, withal so good, so sterling, such a trusty friend was he. I delighted to witness the friendship that rapidly sprang up between your mother and Nicholas. He entertained her, told her stories, made her laugh.—She would often exclaim, 'Dear, good Nicholas! What should we do without him?' I replied, 'That is right.

Let him be next to your son and your husband in your affection.' I do not think it is common for one man to love another as I loved Nicholas.

"But after we had been in New York a little more than two months, your mother's manner toward Nicholas began to change. She was cold and formal to him; when he would arrive, instead of running up with outstretched hands and crying, 'Ah, it is you!' she would courtesy to him and say without smiling, 'How do you do?'—She laughed no more at his stories, she appeared to avoid him when she could; when she could not, she was silent and morose. I could see no reason for this. I was pained. I said, 'Bertha, why do you behave so toward our best friend?' Your mother pretended not to understand. 'Don't deny it,' I insisted. 'You are as distant, as polite to him, as if he were a mere acquaintance.' Your mother answered, 'I am sorry to distress you. I don't know what you mean. I was not aware that I had been discourteous to your friend.'—'Has Nicholas done any thing?' I asked.—'No, he has done nothing.'—I blamed your mother severely. I

besought her to subdue what I took for her caprice. Yet every day her conduct toward Nicholas grew colder and more formal. Every day I reproved her more and more earnestly. This was the nearest approach to a quarrel that your mother and I had ever had. It grieved me deeply that she should adopt such a manner toward my friend. I was all the more cordial to him in consequence. I hoped that he would not notice the turn affairs had taken.

"Thus till almost a year ago. You lacked but a fortnight of being one year old.

"Business had kept me down town till late. At last I made up my mind that I should not be able to go home at all that night. So I told Nicholas to visit Bertha and let her know. 'Spend the evening with her,' I said. 'Explain how it is that I am compelled to remain here. Tell her that I will come home to breakfast. Be sure to entertain her. I don't want to think of her as lonesome.'

"Next morning I hurried home. I stole softly into the house, to surprise your mother. Ah, my son, my son, I need not give you the details.—The house was empty. There was a

brief letter from your mother. As I read it, my head swam, a mortal weakness overpowered me, I sank in a swoon upon the floor.

"When I recovered from my swoon, I was lying undressed in bed. There were people round about. I remembered every thing. What! I was lying idle in bed, and Nicholas still alive? I started up to be upon his track. I fell back, impotent. 'What has befallen me?' I asked. I was informed that I had had a hemorrhage of the lungs.

"I need not tell you what I suffered. My suffering was great in proportion to my love. The shame, the disgrace, were nothing. But at one blow to be deprived of wife, child, friend; to have my love and my faith and my happiness shattered at one stroke: it was too much. Yet, let this be impressed upon you, that not for one instant did I blame your mother. I realized that she, like myself, was but the helpless victim of the family curse. It was my fault. I had defied the inevitable. The keenest agony of all was to lie there, unable to rise, and think of Nicholas. Ah, a thousand times in imagination I tore his heart bleeding

from his breast! I hated him now, as much as I had formerly cherished him. And yet, I believe I could in the end have forgiven him, if—ah, but of what use to say, 'If'? Listen to the truth.

"It was a short four months afterward—four months that had seemed, however, a thousand years to me—and I still lay here dead in life, when the good Dr. Hirsch, (to whom now in my dying hours I commend you, my son), came to my bedside and said that he had seen your mother. He believed that if I would take her back, she would be glad. If I would take her back! 'Bring her to me,' I cried. And I thanked " for this manifestation of his mercy. 'You must prepare for a sad change in her,' said Dr. Hirsch.—'Bring her, bring her,' I cried impatiently.

"Not even to you, my son, can I reveal the secret of that first hour, of that deep hour, when your mother sat again at my side and received my pardon—nay, not my pardon, for it was her place to pardon me. If before that it had been possible for me to forgive Nicholas, it was so no longer. For your mother's face was deathly

pale, her cheek hollow, her eye bright with fever. Nicholas had—what? Petted her for a month; for a month, ignored her; for another month, ill treated her; in the end, abandoned her, it might be to starve. Nicholas had done this—Nicholas whom I had loved and trusted. As I saw your mother pine away, grow paler and more feeble beneath my sight, my hatred of that man intensified. On the day your mother died, I promised her that I would get well and live and force him to atone for his offense in blood. My great hatred seemed to endow me with strength. I believed that " would not let me die until I had once again met Nicholas face to face.

" But this delusion was short-lived. A second hemorrhage threw me back, weaker than ever, upon my bed. The physician told me that I had absolutely no ground for hope. It was evident that " had willed that the chastisement of my enemy should not be wrought out by my hand. 'But " is just,' I said. 'He will not allow a crime like this to go unavenged.' It was then that my thought turned to you.

" And all this time, what of you? You too

were lying at the point of death. Of you too the physician said, 'He can not survive the winter.' You, my single hope, threatened at any moment to breathe your last. 'But no,' I cried, 'it shall not be so. My Ernest must live. As " is both just and merciful, Ernest will live.'

"I watched the fluctuations of your illness, divided between hope and fear, between faith in the goodness of " and doubt lest the worst might come to pass. Ah, that was a breathless period. Day after day passed by, and there was no certainty. Constantly the doctor said, 'Death is merely a question of a few days, more or less.' Constantly my heart replied, 'No, no, he will not die. " has decreed that he shall live.' I prayed that your life might be spared, morning, noon, and night. My own strength was ebbing away. But that was of little matter. I wanted to hold out only until I should know for good and all whether my son was to survive.

"Blessed be the name of " forever! At the moment when the physician said, 'He will die within an hour,' lo! the God of our fathers

touched your body with his healing wand. There was a change for the better. The physician himself could not deny it. He maintained that it was but transitory. 'Nothing short of a miracle,' said he, 'can save this baby's life.'

'We will see,' said I aloud. To myself I said, 'The miracle has been performed.'

"I was right. Two days later the physician confessed that your chances of recovery were good. Two days later still you were out of danger. " had heard my prayers. The God of Israel is a righteous God! Oh, for the tongue of the prophets to sing a sufficient song of thanksgiving to ". He has snatched you from the clutch of death for a purpose. He will see to it that you fulfill that purpose, though your heart be burned to ashes in the task. He will make you to be great like Ephraim and Manasseh. (*Y's'imcha Elohim k'Ephraim v'chi Manassch!*)

"Again I have summoned your nurse, to bring you to my bedside. Again I have laid down my pen, to place my hand upon your head and bless you in the name of ". Again,

before reading further, pause for a space and pray that the breath of God may make strong your heart.

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"My son, I allow you one-and-twenty years to become a man, one-and-twenty years to gain strength of arm and firmness of will. I allow you one-and-twenty years of youth, one-and-twenty years in which to enjoy life, free of care. On your twenty-first birthday, if the good and reverend Dr. Hirsch live, he will put this writing into your hands. Should he be dead, others will see that you receive it. On your twenty-first birthday you will be a boy no longer. You will recognize yourself for a man. You will ask, 'What is to be the aim, the occupation of my life?' You will read this writing, and your question will be answered. Your father on the brink of the grave pauses to speak to you as follows:—

"In the name of ", who in response to my prayers has saved your life, who created you out of the dust and the ashes, who tore you from the embrace of death and restored health

to your shattered body for one sole purpose, in his name I charge you: Find my enemy out and put him to death. He is still a young man. He will scarcely be an old man when you have become of age. It is a long time to wait, a long time to defer my vengeance, one-and-twenty years, but so I believe " has willed it. After you have reached the age of one-and-twenty years, let that be the single motive and object of your days: to find him out and put him to death by the most painful mode of death you can devise. Do not strike him down with one blow. Torture him to death. Pluck his flesh from his bones shred by shred. Prolong his agony to the utmost. Thus shall you compensate in some measure for the one-and-twenty years of delay. And again and again as he is writhing under your heel, cry out to him, 'Remember, remember the friend who loved you and whom you betrayed, whose honey you turned to gall and wormwood.' But, if meanwhile from other causes death should have overtaken him, then shall you transfer your anger to his next-of-kin; then, I charge you, visit the penalty of his sin upon his

children and his children's children. For has not " decreed that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children even unto the third and fourth generations? The blood of Nicholas must be spilled, whether it courses in his veins or in the veins of his posterity. The race of Nicholas must be exterminated, obliterated from the face of the earth. As you honor the wish of a dying father, as you dread the wrath of ", falter not in this that I command. Search the four corners of the world until you have unearthed my enemy or his kindred. Empty his blood upon the sand as you would the blood of swine. And think, as he is calling out to you for mercy, think, 'At last my father's revenge is wreaked! At last my father's spirit can rest content. Even now my father is in transports of delight as he witnesses this fruition of his hope. At each thrust of my knife into our enemy's flesh, the heart of my father leaps with satisfaction. At each scream of pain that escapes from our enemy's throat, the voice of my father waxes great with joy.'

"Ah, my son, at that mighty hour, whether I be confined in the bottom fastnesses of hell or

exalted to the mountain tops of paradise, I shall know what is happening, I shall fling myself upon my face and sing a song of praise to " for the unspeakable rapture which he has permitted me to enjoy.

" My son, I trust you. You will not falter. You will remember that " has saved you from death for this solitary purpose, that you have no right to your own life except as you employ it for the chastisement of my foe. I have no fear. You will hate him with a hatred equal to my own. You will wreak that hatred as I should have wreaked it, had my life been spared. I have no fear, no distrust, and yet—all things are possible. My son, I warn you. In case you be faint-hearted, in case you recoil from this mission you are charged with, or in case by any accident—though " will allow no such accident to happen—in case by any accident this writing should fail to reach you, I shall be prepared. From my grave I shall watch over you. From my grave I shall guide you. From my grave I shall see to it that you do not neglect the duty of your life. Though seas roll between you and him, I shall see to it that you two meet.

Though your heart be bound to him as to your own flesh and blood, I shall see to it that you swerve not. And if he be dead, I shall see to it that you are brought face to face with his kindred. Man, woman, or child, spare neither. Young or old, able or feeble-bodied, let it matter not. In case your strength desert you, in case your courage weaken, I shall be at your side, I shall nerve your arm. If you hesitate, remember that my spirit will possess your body and do what must be done in spite of your hesitation. There will be no escape for you. As certainly as the moon must follow the earth, so certainly will and must you, my son, accomplish the purpose for which your life is given.—But falter not, as you cherish the fair name of your mother, as you honor the desire, as you fear the curse, of a dying father, as you hope for peace for your own soul.

"I have done. I think I have made every thing clear. Farewell.

"Your father, ERNEST NEUMAN.

"I have written the above during my moments of strength for the last four days. Now I have just read it over. I find that it but feebly ex-

presses all that I mean and feel. But " will enlighten you as you read. It is enough. I find also that I have omitted to mention his full name. His name is Nicholas Pathzuol."

XII.

THE emotions that grew upon me, as I read my father's message, need not be detailed. How, as I painfully deciphered it, word following upon word added steadily to the weight of those emotions, until at length it seemed as though the burden was greater than I could bear, I need not tell. Indeed, so engrossed had I become by what had gone before, that the sense of the last line did not penetrate my mind. I leaned back in my chair and drew a long breath like one exhausted by an effort beyond his strength. I waited for the commotion of thought and feeling to quiet a little. I was completely horror-stricken and tired out and bewildered.

But by and by it occurred to me, "What did he say the man's name was?" And languidly I picked up the paper and read the postscript for a second time. The next instant I was on my feet, rigid, aghast, for consternation. What!

Pathzuol! The name of Veronika! My head swam. It was as if I had sustained a terrific blow between the eyes. Could it be that this Pathzuol, the man who had dishonored my mother, the man whom my father had commissioned me to murder, was *her father?* the father of her who had indeed been murdered, and of whose murder I had been accused? The mere possibility stunned and sickened me. It was the straw that broke the camel's back. I had been under a pretty tense nervous strain ever since the reception of Tikulski's letter in the afternoon. This last utterly undid me. My muscles relaxed, my knees knocked together, the perspiration trickled down my forehead. I went off into a regular fit of weeping, like a woman.

It was not long before Merivale entered. I looked up and saw him standing over me, with a physiognomy divided between astonishment and contempt.

"Ah, Lexow," he said, shaking his head, "I am surprised at you." Then his eyes grew stern, and he continued sharply, "Stop! Stop your crying. You ought to be ashamed. What-

ever new misfortune has befallen you, you have no right to act like this. It is a man's part to bear misfortune silently. It is a school-girl's or a baby's to take on in this fashion. Stop your crying, dry your eyes, and show what you are made of. Grit your teeth and clench your fists and don't open your mouth till you are ready to behave like a reasonable being."

His words sobered me to some extent.

"Well," I said, "I am calm now. What do you want?"

"If I should do what *I* want," he answered, "you would not speedily forget it. I should—but never mind that. What I want *you* to do is to speak up like a man and explain the occasion of this rumpus, if you can."

"Here, read this," I said, offering him the paper.

He took it, glanced at it, turned it this way and that, handed it back. "How can I read it?" he said. "It's German. Read it to me. —Come, read it to me," he repeated, as I hesitated.

I gulped down my reluctance and read the whole thing through as rapidly as I could in

English. He sat across the table, smoking and drawing figures in the ash-pan with the ashes of his cigarette. Once in a while I heard him whistle softly to himself. He had thrown his last cigarette aside and was biting his finger-nails when the reading drew to a close.

"No more?" he asked.

"Isn't that enough?" I rejoined.

"Oh, I didn't mean that. Oh, yes; that's enough; and it's pretty bad too. But I expected something worse from the rough way you cut up."

"Worse? In heaven's name what could be worse? My mother dishonored, my father broken hearted, and I marked out for a murderer, even from my cradle? And then—"

"I say it's hard, deucedly hard. But inasmuch as you're not a murderer, you know, I wouldn't let that side of the matter bother me, if I were you. The bad part of the business is to think of how your father's happiness, your mother's innocence, were destroyed. Think how he must have suffered!"

"But you haven't listened, you haven't understood the worst, yet. Here, see his name —Pathzuol."

"Well, what of it?"

"Why, don't you remember? It is the same name as hers—Veronika's—my sweetheart's."

"Decidedly!" exclaimed Merivale. "That is a startling coincidence, I admit."

"Couple that with—with the rest of my father's story and with—with the—well, with all the facts—and I think you'll confess that it was sufficient to shake me up a bit. To come upon that name at the end of such a letter, it was like being knocked down. I lost my self-possession. Think! if he *was* her father! But, oh no; it isn't credible. It's sheer accident, of course."

"Of course it is. The letter doesn't say that he was even married. I suppose there's more than one Pathzuol in the world as well as more than one Merivale. But all the same, it's a coincidence of a sort to stir a fellow up. I don't wonder you lost your balance. Only, the idea of boohooing like a woman! That's inexcusable. Mercy! what a good hater your father was! And what an unspeakable wretch, Nicholas!"

"Yes," I went on, "it gave me a pretty severe

jolt, the sight of that name; and I can't seem to get over it. I don't know why, but I can't help feeling as though there were more in this than either you or I perceive, as though there were some deduction or other to be drawn from it which is right within arm's reach and yet which I can't grasp—some horrible corollary, you know. My brain is in a whirl, I—I—"

"You are quite unstrung, as it is natural you should be. But you must exert your reason and put the stopper upon your imagination. Let deductions and corollaries take care of themselves. Confine yourself to the facts, and you'll see that they're not as bad as they might be, after all. For example—"

"But it is just the facts that perplex and horrify me. My father destines me to be the murderer of Nicholas Pathzuol or of his next of kin. All ignorant of this destiny, I meet and love a lady whose name is Pathzuol—a name so rare that I had never heard it before, and have not since, except in this writing to-day. My lady is murdered; and I, though innocent, am suspected and accused of the crime. Add to this my father's threat to come

back from the grave and use me as his instrument, in case I hesitate or in case I never receive his letter; and—well, it is like a problem in mathematics—given this and that, to determine so and so. No, no, there's no use denying it, this strange combination of facts must have some awful meaning. It seems as though each minute I was just on the point of catching it, and then as I tighten my fingers around it, it escapes again and eludes me."

"Nonsense, man. You are yielding to your fancy, like a child who, because he feels oppressed in the dark, conjures up ghosts and goblins, and can not be persuaded that there are none about, till you light the gas and show him that the room is empty. Come, light the gas of your common sense! Recognize that your problem has no solution, none because it is not a true problem, but merely a fortuitous arrangement of circumstances which chances to bear a superficial resemblance to one. Reduce your *quasi* problem to its simplest terms: thus, given x and y and z, to find the value of b. Don't you see that there's no connection?"

"Oh, of course, I acknowledge that I can't *see* any connection. That's just the trouble. I *feel* that there must be a connection—one that I can't see. If I could only see it, it wouldn't be so bad. But this perplexity, this——"

"This fiddle-stick! You are resolved to distress yourself, and I suppose it's useless for me to labor with you. Only this much I will say, that if you should bestow a little of the energy you are expending in the effort to catch hold of a non-existent inference, upon sympathy with your father's unhappiness, I should have more respect for you. They talk about suffering ennobling and chastening men, forsooth! So far as you are concerned, suffering has done nothing but intensify your natural egotism. For instance, after reading that letter of your father's, the first idea that strikes you is, 'How does it affect *me*, how am *I* concerned by it?' whereas the spectacle of your father's immense grief ought to have absorbed you to the exclusion of every thing else, ought to have left no room in your mind for any other thought."

But for all Merivale could say by way either of appeal or of reprimand, I was powerless to

subdue that feeling which had begun to stir in my breast. I recognized that I was unreasonable and selfish, but I was also helpless. I could not get over the shock I had sustained when Pathzuol's name first took shape before my eyes. Every time I remembered that moment—and it kept recurring to me in spite of myself—my heart sank and my breath became spasmodic, as if I had been confronted by a ghost. And then ensued that sensation of groping in the dark after something invisible, unknown, yet surely there, hovering within arm's reach, but as elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp. I struggled with this sensation, tried my utmost to shake it off, but it sat like a monster on my heart. Its weight was deadly, its touch was icy; it would not be dislodged.

"It is true, all that you say, Merivale," I returned at length. "But the question is not one of what I ought to do; it is one of what I can do. I know I ought to regard this matter in the same collected spirit that you display; but it concerns me so intimately, you see, that I can't resist being somewhat perturbed. My wits, so to speak, have been scattered by an

unexpected blow. I shan't be able to emulate your *sang-froid* until they have got back to their proper places. I'm so heated and upset that I don't really know what I think or what I feel. I guess perhaps I'd better go for a walk and cool off, and arrive at an understanding with myself."

"The very worst thing you could possibly do—go away by yourself and brood and get more and more morbid every minute. What you want is to think of something else for a while, and then when you come back to this subject you'll be in a condition to regard it in its correct light. Let's—let's play a game of cribbage, or read some Rossetti; or suppose you fiddle a little?"

"No, I feel the need of air and exercise. I'll go out and take a walk. I sha'n't brood, I'll reflect on the sensible things you've said. Good-by."

I walked briskly through the streets, striving to collect my faculties, striving to regain sufficient mental tranquillity to comprehend exactly what the long and short of the whole business was. But the feeling that there was something

more in it than I could make out, intensified. It would not be dispelled. The oftener I went over the circumstances, the more significant they seemed.—Significant of what? Precisely the question that I could not answer. The longer I allowed my mind to dwell upon them, the more acute became that sensation of wrestling with a problem, of groping for a something suspended near to me in the dark. My father had destined me to be a murderer; the name of my intended victim was Pathzuol; I had been engaged to a young lady of the same name, very possibly the daughter of my father's foe; she had indeed been murdered, though not by my hand; and yet I, despite my innocence, had been deemed guilty of the crime: this chain of facts kept passing over and over before me. I felt that it must mean something; it could not be purely fortuitous; there was a break, a missing link, which, if I could but supply it, would make the hidden meaning clear. I walked the streets all night, unable to fix my thoughts on any thing else. I said, "You are merely wearing yourself out and getting your brains into a tangle: try to divert your atten-

tion. Count up to a thousand. See how much you can remember of the Moonlight Sonata. Conjugate a Hebrew verb. Do what you will, only stop puzzling over this matter. As Merivale says, when you have thought of something else for a while, you will be in a condition to return to it with refreshed intelligence, and view it in the right light." But the next moment I was at it again, in greater perplexity than ever. Of course, I succeeded in working myself up to a high degree of nervousness: was as exhausted and as exasperated as though I had spent an hour in futile attempts to thread a needle.

But now it began to get light. The stillness of the night was broken, my solitude was disturbed. Hosts of sparrows began to congregate upon the window sills, and their busy twittering filled the air. First one steam-whistle blew in the distance, then another nearer by, then another, and finally a chorus of them: bells began to ring, wagons rattled over the pavement, the shrill whoo-hoop of the milk-man resounded through the streets. The clatter of footsteps became audible upon the sidewalk.

People began to walk abroad. The sky turned from black to gray, from gray to blue. Shutters were banged, doors slammed, windows thrown open: housemaids with brooms and buckets appeared upon the stoops. Dawn had arrived from across the Ocean with the smell of the sea-breeze still clinging to her skirts. The city was waking to its feverish multifarious life.—And the result was that I forgot myself—was penetrated and exalted by that vague tremulous exhilaration which always accompanies the first breath of morning. I expanded my lungs and inhaled the fresh air and felt a glow of warmth and animation shoot through my limbs.

"Ah," I cried, "a truce to the blue devils! I will go home and take up my regular life again, just as though this interruption had not occurred."

I hurried back to our lodgings. Merivale was already up and dressed, smoking a cigarette over the newspaper.

"Hail!" I exclaimed. "I am glad to see you out of bed so early!"

"I have not been abed since you left," he answered.

"Why not? What have you been doing?"

"Thinking about you—about what can be done to make a man of you."

"Oh, you needn't worry about that. I'm all right now. I sha'n't play the fool again, I promise you. I propose that we sink the last four-and-twenty hours into eternal oblivion. What do you say?"

"Nothing would more delight me."

"Good! Let's begin at the first cause. Where's the manuscript? We'll set fire to it, and agree to believe that it never really existed."

"No," said Merivale, "I wouldn't set fire to it—at least not till it is manifest whether your present mood is merely a reaction from your late one, or whether it is going to last. I will dispose of the manuscript—see."

He found it on the table, opened the double cover of the box, restored the papers to the place they had occupied formerly, and locked the box up in the closet of his writing-desk.

"There," he said, "that's the best thing to do. I'll take care of it. Some day you may have a little sympathy to waste on your father,

and then you'll be glad this writing was not destroyed."

We had breakfast, and after the cups and saucers were cleared away, applied ourselves to our ordinary forenoon occupation. It turned out indeed that my good spirits were, as Merivale had suspected, to some extent reactionary: but they left me sober rather than sad. I was absent-minded and committed numberless blunders while my friend dictated his poems: but I did not let my thoughts settle down again upon the matters that had engaged them during the night. They simply wandered about in a random way from one indifferent topic to another, as it is the habit of thoughts to do when the thinker has not had his customary allotment of sleep. Presently Merivale suspended his dictation, and I waited passively for him to resume, supposing that he had reached a point where reflection was necessary to further progress. His silence continued. Pretty soon my eyelids dropped like leaden curtains over my eyes, and my chin sank upon my breast. I was actually nodding. I started up and pinched myself, ashamed of appearing drowsy.

Lo! I perceived that my friend had met with the same mishap. He too was nodding in his chair. For a moment we eyed each other sheepishly, each endeavoring to feign wide wakefulness. Then Merivale rose and stretched himself and laughed.

"For my part I cast off the mask," he cried. "I am sleepy and I am going to bed. You'd better follow suit."

I needed no urging. We retired to our dormitory, and as speedily as was practicable one of us at least fell into an unfathomable slumber.

XIII.

I DON'T know how many hours afterward I awoke. Gradually, as consciousness asserted itself, I realized that somebody was playing a violin in the adjacent room: and at length it struck me that it must be Merivale practicing. I pricked up my ears and hearkened. Oh, yes; he was running over his part of the last new composition we had studied. The clock-like tick-tack of his metronome marked the rhythm. I lay still and listened till he had repeated the same phrase some twenty times. Finally I got up and crossed the threshold that divided us.

Merivale kept on playing for a minute or two, unaware of my intrusion. Not till it behooved him to turn the page did he lift his eyes. Then, encountering my night-robed figure, they lighted up with merriment. Their owner lowered his instrument, remained silent for a moment, in the

end gave vent to an uproarious peal of laughter.

"What are you laughing at?" I stammered.

When he had got his hilarity somewhat under control he replied: "At you. Come and gaze upon yourself." And conducting me to a mirror he said, pointing, "There, isn't that a funny sight?"

I looked sleepy, that was all. My hair was awry, and my eyes were heavy, and my costume was a trifle wrinkled. Still, I suppose, my general appearance was sufficiently ludicrous. Be that as it may, I could not help joining in Merivale's laughter: and, thus put into good humor at the outset, I cheerfully complied with his request to hasten through my toilet and "come and fiddle with him."

"Let's start here," he said, opening the book.

We read for a while in concert. As usual my arm seemed to swing of its separate will, I myself becoming all but comatose. By and by I perceived that Merivale had discontinued and was seated at one side with his instrument upon his knees. Then I perceived that I was no longer following the book. I closed my

eyes and listened. As usual I heard the voice of my violin very much as though some other person had been the performer.

I found that I was playing a lot of bits from memory. I heard the light, quick tread of a gavotte which I had learned as a boy and meantime almost forgotten; I heard snatches from the chants the *Chazzan* sings in the synagogue; I heard the Flower Song from Faust mixing itself up with a recitative from Lohengrin. Then I heard the passionate wail of Chopin become predominant: the exquisite melody of the *Berceuse*, motives from *Les Polonaises*, and at length the impromptu in *C*-sharp minor—that to which I have alluded in the early part of this narrative, as descriptive of Veronika. Following it, came the songs that Veronika herself had been most prone to sing, Bizet, Pergolese, Schumann, morsels of German folk *liede*, old French romances. And ever and anon that phrase from the impromptu kept recurring. Every thing else seemed to lead up to it. It terminated a brilliant passage by Liszt. It cropped out in the middle of a theme from the Meistersinger. And with its every new recur-

rence, the picture of Veronika which it presented to my imagination grew more life-like and palpable, until ere long it was almost as though I saw her standing near me in substantial objective form. As I have said, I scarcely realized that it was I who played. Except for the sensation along my wrist as the bow bit the catgut, I believe I should have quite forgotten it. But now abruptly, without the least volition upon my part, my arm acquired a fresh vigor. The voice of my violin increased in volume. The character of the music underwent a change. From a medley of fragments it turned to a coherent, continuous whole. Note succeeded note in natural and inevitable sequence. I tried to recognize the composition. I could not. It was quite unfamiliar to me. Odd, because of course at some time I must have practiced it again and again. Otherwise how had I been able to play it now? It flowed from the strings without hitch or hesitancy. Yet my best efforts to place it were ineffectual. Doubly odd, because it was no ordinary composition. It had a striking individuality of its own.

It began with laughter-provoking scherzo, as dainty as the pattering of April rain-drops, as riotous as the frolicking of children let loose from school; which, by degrees tempering to a quieter allegro, presently modulated into the minor, and necessarily, therefore, became plaintive and sentimental. For a while bar succeeded bar, fitful and undetermined, as if groping blindly for a climax. Next, a quick, fluttering crescendo, and an exultant major chord. This completed the first movement. The second began pianissimo upon the *A* and *E* strings, an allegretto full of placid contentment; again, a minor modulation; again, blind groping for a climax, this time more strenuous than before, tinged by a passion, impelled by an insatiable desire; adagio on *G* and *D*, still minor; then a swift return to major, a leap of the bow and fingers back to *A* and *E*, and on these latter strings a rhapsody expressive of the utmost possible human joy. Third movement andante, sober but still joyous; the music, which hitherto had been restless and destitute of an apparent aim, seemed to have caught a purpose, to have gained substance and confidence in itself.

It proceeded in this wise for several periods, when sharply, without the faintest warning, it broke into a discordant shriek of laughter, the laughter of a demon whose evil designs had triumphed.

Though I had not recognized the composition, up to this point I had understood it perfectly. Its intrinsic lucidity carried the intelligence along. But henceforward I was mystified. The reason for the violent change of theme, time, and quality, I could not divine ; nor could I appreciate, either, how the subsequent effects were produced or what they were meant to signify. My impression was, as I have said, that the laughter which my violin seemed to be echoing was demoniac laughter, the outburst of a Satan over his success, of a Succubus fastening upon his prey. Yet the next instant I was doubtful whether it was indeed laughter at all? Was it not perhaps the hysterical sobbing of a human being frenzied by grief? And again the next instant neither of these conceptions appeared to be the correct one. Was it not rather a chorus?—a chorus of witches?—plotting some fiendish atrocity?—chuckling over a

vicious pleasantry?—now, whispering amicably together, now wrangling ferociously, now uniting in blood-curdling screams of delight? Whatever it might be, I could not penetrate its sense. I listened with deepening perplexity. I wished it would come to an end. But it did not occur to me to stop my arm and lay aside my bow. The music went on and on—until Merivale caught me by the shoulder and snatched my violin from my grasp. He was speaking.

The descent back to earth was too abrupt. It took me some time to gather myself together. "Eh—what were you saying?" I asked at last.

"I was saying, stop! Consider a fellow's nervous system. Where in the name of Lucifer did you learn that infernal music? Whom is it by?"

"Oh," I answered, "oh, I don't know whom it is by."

"It out-Berliozes Berlioz," he added. "Is it his?"

"Perhaps. I don't remember. I am tired. Let me rest a moment without talking."

"Well," he continued, "it was a terrible strain to listen to it. I am quite played out—feel as if—forgive the comparison—as if I had spent the last hour in a dentist's chair. However, for relief's sake, let's go to dinner. Are you aware that we haven't eaten any thing since early morning?"

After dinner Merivale insisted that we should take a long walk "to shake out the kinks," and after the long walk we were tired enough to return to our pillows.

I went straight to sleep; but my sleep was troubled. As soon as Merivale had said good-night and extinguished the gas, memory began to repeat the music I had played. I heard it throughout my sleep. Every little while I would wake up and try to banish it by fixing my attention on other matters. But it kept thrumming away in my brain despite myself. I could not silence it. Merivale's reference to a dentist's chair was, if inelegant, at least a graphic one. I got as hopelessly irritated as I could have done with a score of dentists simultaneously grinding at my teeth. My very arteries seemed to be beating to its rhythm.

In one fit of wakefulness, that lasted longer than its predecessors had done, I found myself unconsciously tattooing it upon the wall at my bed's head.

"Is that you?" Merivale's voice demanded from out of the darkness.

"Yes," I replied. "Aren't you asleep?"

"Mercy, no. That music you played—or rather, stray fragments of it, keep running through my brain. I haven't been able to sleep for a long while."

"That's singular. It affects me the same way. I was just drumming it on the wall. I've been trying to get rid of it all night."

"It has wonderful staying powers, for a fact. I'm glad you're awake, though. Companionship in misery is sweet."

"Yes, I also feel rather more comfortable now that you have spoken. Do you know, it's an immense puzzle to me, that music? I can't imagine where or when I ever learned it. And yet it is not the sort of thing one would be apt to forget. I can't recognize the style even, can't get a clew to the composer."

"The style is emphatically that of Berlioz."

"Perhaps so. But it can't be by Berlioz, because I never learned any thing by Berlioz at all."

"Hum!" A pause. Then, "Say, Lexow—"

"Well?"

"It isn't possible that it's original, is it?"

"Original? How do you mean?"

"Why, an improvisation—a little thing of your own."

"Oh, no; oh, no, I never improvise—at least an entire composition, like that. Nobody does. It bears all the marks of careful workmanship. It must be something well-known that has temporarily slipped from my memory. It's too striking not to be well-known. To-morrow I'll go through my music and find it; and I'll wager it will turn out to be quite familiar. Only, it's extremely odd that I can't place it."

"Why wait till to-morrow?"

"Why, we can't begin to-night, can we?"

"Why not? I say, let's begin right off. The cursed thing is keeping us awake, and there doesn't seem to be any escape from it. We may as well utilize our wakefulness, as lie here

doing nothing but toss about. I say, let's light the gas and go to work."

"Oh, well, I'm agreeable. The sooner the better as far as I'm concerned."

"Good," cried Merivale.

He sprang out of bed and lighted the gas.

"Shall Mahomet go to the mountain or shall the mountain come to Mahomet?" he inquired, blinking his eyes.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean shall we dress and adjourn to the other room? Or shall I bring your musical library in here, so that we can conduct our investigation without getting up?"

"Just as you please," I answered.

"Well, we'll move the mountain, then," he said, and left the room.

He made two or three trips, back and forth, bearing an armful of music as the fruit of each. The last folios deposited on the floor, "Now, as to method," he inquired, "how shall we start? It will occupy us till doom's-day if we undertake to go through the whole of this. I suppose there are some composers we can eliminate *à priori*, eh?"

"Oh, yes; Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Liszt, in particular, we needn't trouble with. I'd keep an especially sharp eye out for Rubenstein and Dvorak and Winiauski. It's fortunate that I've preserved all the music I've ever owned. We can't miss it if we're only patient enough."

"Well, here goes," he cried, thrusting a thick pile of music into my hands, and apportioning an equal amount to himself.

We were industrious. It is needless that I should tarry with the incidents of our search. At daybreak we had not yet quite finished, and we had not yet struck any thing that bore the slightest resemblance to the composition in question.

"But little remains," said Merivale. "In another five minutes we will have found it; or my first hypothesis was true."

"Your first hypothesis?" I inquired.

"Yes—that it was original—a lucubration of your own."

"Oh, that, I tell you, isn't possible. I'm not vain enough to imagine that I could improvise in such style, thank you."

"Well, we won't enter into a dispute, at any rate not till our present line of investigation is exhausted. Back to the saddle!"

For a space we were silent.

"*Eh bien, mon brave!*" cried Merivale at length. "There goes the last of my half," and he sent a sheet of music fluttering through the air.

"And here is the last of mine," I responded, laying down Schumann's *Warum.*

"And we are still in the dark."

"Still in the dark."

"It isn't possible that we have overlooked it?"

"I'm sure I haven't. I took pains with each separate page."

"Likewise, I! Therefore I congratulate you. I'll order a laurel wreath at the florist's, the first thing after breakfast."

"Nonsense! How many times need I tell you that I could not by hook or crook have made it up as I went along? The mere notion is ridiculous. It must have got lost, that's all."

"On the contrary, the notion that you once

learned it, then forgot it, then played it off without a fault from beginning to end, is trebly ridiculous. It was ridiculous of us to waste our time hunting for it, also. I am entirely convinced that it is yours. Why not? Ideas have come to other people—why not to you? Yesterday while you played, you were excited and wrought up, and the result was that you had an inspiration. By Jove, you're lucky! It's enough to make you famous."

"But, Merivale, fancy the absurdities you are uttering. Do you seriously suppose any body—even a regular composer—could take up his fiddle and reel off a complicated thing like that without once halting? Why, man, there are four or five distinct movements. You might as well pretend that a mere elocutionist could write an intricate epic poem without once pausing to make an erasure or find a rhyme, as that I, a simple instrumentalist, could have done this."

"Well, there's only one way of settling the matter. We'll refer it to an authority. You jot down a few specimen bars on paper, and I'll submit it to your friend, Dr. Rodolph. Of

course he will identify it at once, if it isn't yours."

"If that will satisfy you, well and good," I assented.

In the course of the forenoon, Merivale, having procured a stock of music-paper at a shop in the neighborhood, said, "I don't know how rapidly a man can write music, but if it isn't too slow work, I'd seriously counsel you to put down the whole thing, while you're about it. In fact I'd counsel you to do so any how. If by hazard it is original, you know, you'd better make a memorandum of it while it's still fresh in your mind. Otherwise you might forget it. That often happens to me. A bright idea, a felicitous turn of phraseology, occurs to me when I'm away somewhere—in the horse-cars, at the theater, paying a call, or what-not—and if I don't make an instant minute of it in my note-book, it's sure to fly off and never be heard from again."

"We'll see," I returned. "I haven't written a bar of music for such a long while that I don't know how hard I shall find it. But I used to make a daily practice of writing from

memory, because it increases one's facility for sight-reading."

I hummed the first two or three phrases softly to myself, beating time with my fingers; then drew up to the writing-table and commenced to set them down. At the outset I had considerable difficulty, was obliged, so to speak, to spell my way along note by note, and committed several blunders which I had to go back to and correct. But gradually my path grew smoother and smoother, until I was no longer conscious of effort; and at last I became so much absorbed and so much interested by what I was doing, that my hand sped across the paper like a machine performing the regular function for which it was contrived. I suppose mental activity always begets mental exhilaration; and that mental exhilaration in turn, when allowed to attain too high a pitch, always approaches the borderland of its antipode, on the principle that extremes meet. At any rate such was my experience in the present instance. At first, both mind and fingers were sluggish and moved laboriously. Then mind got into running order, and fingers

lagged behind; then fingers caught up with mind, and for a while the two kept pace; then, finally, fingers spurted ahead and it was mind's turn to acknowledge itself left in the rear. Mental exhilaration gave place to bewilderment, as I saw that my hand was forging along faster than my thought could dictate, in apparent obedience to an independent will of its own—which bewilderment ripened into thorough-going mystification, as the hand dashed forward and back like a shuttle in a loom, with a velocity that seemed ever to be increasing. I had precisely the sensation of a man who has started to run down a hill, and whose legs have acquired such a momentum that he can not stop them: on and on he must submit to be borne until some outside obstacle interferes, even though a yawning chasm await him at the bottom. Toward the end I scarcely saw the paper on which I was writing; I am sure I saw nothing of the matter that I wrote. I said to myself, "Of course you will find that all this stuff is incoherent and meaningless when you get through." But I waited passively till my hand should get through of its own accord, I

made no endeavor to draw the rein upon it. Eventually it came to a standstill with a round turn. I was quite winded. I needed leisure in which to recover my equilibrium.

Merivale—of whose presence I had become oblivious—crossed over and began gathering the scattered sheets of paper from the table. The sight of him helped to bring me to myself.

"Well," I said, "there it is. I don't suppose you can read it. I got so excited I hardly knew what I was about."

"That's all right," he answered reassuringly. "I'm much obliged to you for the trouble you've taken. But what," he added abruptly, "but what is all this that you have written?"

"Why, what do you fancy? The music, of course, that you asked me to."

"No, no; I mean this writing, this text, with which you have wound up?"

"Writing? Text? What are you driving at?"

"Why, here—this," he said handing me the paper.

"Mercy upon me!" I exclaimed, thoroughly

amazed. "I was not aware that I had written any thing."

The last half dozen pages were covered with written words—blotted, scrawling, scarcely decipherable, but unmistakably written words.

"Well, certainly, this is most astonishing. Whatever it is, I have written it unawares."

I dropped the manuscript and leaned back in my chair, dumbfounded by this latest development.

"Here," said Merivale, "is the point where the music ends and the words begin."

The music ended, the words began, just at that point where last night the shriek of malevolent laughter had interfered with the current of melody. From that point to the bottom of the last page not another bar of music was discernible—not a note of the incomprehensible witches' chorus—simply words, words that I dared not read.

"This is magic, this is ghost-work," I said. "It appalls me. Look at it, Merivale. Does it make sense? Or is it simply a mass of scribbling without rhyme or reason?"

"Ye-es," rejoined Merivale slowly, "it seems

to make sense. The penmanship is pretty blind, but the words appear to hang together. It begins, 'I walked re—re—reluctantly'—next word very bad—'I walked reluctantly—reluctantly—away'—oh yes, that's it—'away—from the—house.' By Jove, this *is* singular! Shall I go on?"

"Yes, go on," I said faintly. There was panic in my heart.

Merivale continued, picking his way laboriously. The following is what he read.

XIV.

"I WALKED reluctantly away from the house after I saw her light put out. I hated so to leave her that it was as if a chain and ball had been attached to my ankle. I had reached a point on Second avenue about half the distance home when I halted. I had begun to feel sick. Suddenly my ears had begun to ring, my head to swim. I clutched at a lamp-post to keep from falling. The ringing in my ears became louder and louder—a roar like that of a strong wind. A deathly nausea overcame me. I thought I was going to faint, perhaps to die. I held on to the lamp-post and tried to call out for help. I could not utter the slightest sound; my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth as it does in nightmare. I seemed to be growing weaker with every breath. The noise in my ears was like an unbroken peal of thunder. My brain went spinning around and

around as if it had been caught in a whirlpool. Then all at once my breath began to come in quick short gasps like the breath of a panting dog or like the breath of a person who has taken laughing-gas. I closed my eyes and for how long I know not clung to the lamp-post, waiting for this internal upheaval to reach its climax. By degrees my breath returned to its normal state; the uproar in my ears subsided; my brain got quiet again. I felt as well as ever, only a bit startled, a bit shaky in the legs. I thought, 'You have had an attack of vertigo, a half fainting-fit. Now you would best hurry home.' But—but to my unmingled consternation my body refused to act in response to my will. I was puzzled. I tried again. Useless. I had absolutely no control over my muscles. Experiment proved that I could not move a finger; experiment proved that I could not put forth my foot and take a step. I was horrified. Ah, I thought, this is a stroke of paralysis. For a second time I attempted to summon help. For a second time my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth.

"But if all this horrified me, how much more

horrified was I the moment after, when, in entire independence of my will, that body of mine which I had fancied paralyzed began to act of its own accord! began to march briskly off in a direction exactly opposite to that which I wished to follow! If I had been puzzled before, how much more hopelessly puzzled was I now! Experiment proved that I was as powerless to stop myself at present, as an instant since I had been to set myself in motion. I was appalled. I knew not what this phenomenon was due to or what it might lead to. It seemed precisely as though the chords connecting my mind and body had been severed, as though the will of another person had become the reigning occupant of my frame. A thousand frightful possibilities flashed upon my imagination. With this utter incompetency to govern my own movements, God knew what might happen. I might walk into the river; or I might—I might commit some irretrievable wrong. Helpless and irresponsible as I was, I might accomplish that which all the rest of my days I should repent.

Meanwhile I had moved on, until now I

halted again. I looked around. I was in front of Veronika's house. I crossed the street, picked my way through the people who were seated upon the stoop, mounted the staircase, and rang Veronika's bell, wondering constantly what the cause and what the upshot of this adventure might be, and powerless to assert the least influence over my physical acts.

"Veronika's voice sounded from behind the door, 'Is that you, uncle?'

"'No, it is I,' my tongue replied of its own volition.

"The door opened. I saw Veronika with the knob in her hand. She looked surprised. My impulse was to take her in my arms and explain to her the strange accident that had befallen me. I could not. I had no more control over my body than I had over hers.

"Veronika closed the door. She glanced up at my face. Her eyes filled with fear.

"'Why, Ernest,' she cried, 'what is it? What is the matter? Why do you look like this?'

"I paused to collect my utmost strength, then tried to speak. Total failure. Tried to

reassure her with my eyes. Total failure: eyes as uncontrollable as the rest of my person.—But impelled by that other will which had usurped the place of mine, I approached her and asked, 'What is your name?' It was my voice, but it was not I, that asked the question.

"'Oh, for the love of God,' Veronika besought, 'don't act like this. Oh, my Ernest, what terrible joke are you playing? Don't make me think that you have gone mad.'

"'What is your name?' my voice repeated, stonily.

"'My name? What can you mean? Oh God, what has come over my beloved?'

"Her face was pale, her eyes were full of anguish. And I—I was impotent to comfort her. My heart went out to her with a great bound of love; but I was in irons, chained down, compelled to witness, forbidden to interfere with the action of this awful drama. For a third time my tongue repeated, 'Your name—tell me your name.'

"'My name?' she gasped. 'You know my name—Veronika. See, don't you recognize me, Ernest? I am Veronika, whom you are going

to marry. Oh, my loved one, you are ill. What can I do to make you well?'

"'Tell me your surname,' I said.

"'My surname—why, Pathzuol. Oh, Ernest, say you know me.'

"'And your father's name?'

"'My father—his name was Nicholas—but he is dead—died when I was a little girl. Oh, God, what does this mean?'

"'Enough; come with me,' said the devil whose victim I had become.

"I grasped her wrist and led her down the hallway. If Veronika was terrified, her terror could not have equaled mine. What deed was I now bent upon committing? She followed me passively. The expression of her eyes made my soul ache within me. How I longed to speak to her and soothe her. How I longed to step between her and myself, to protect her from this maniac in whose power she was. To be obliged to stand by and see this thing enacted—imagine the agony I suffered.

"I led her down the hallway and into the dining-room. Then I released her wrist, and crossed over to the sideboard. I opened the

sideboard drawer and took out a long, keen knife. I tried the point and the edge of the knife upon my thumb.

"'Are you—are you going to kill me, Ernest?' I heard Veronika ask, very low.

"'Yes, I am going to kill you. Lead the way to your bed-chamber.'

"Veronika's hand clutched convulsively at her breast. She said nothing. She moved slowly back into the hall and thence into her bedroom, I following.

"'Oh, for God's sake, stop and think what you are doing,' she cried out suddenly, turning and facing me at the threshold of her room. 'Think, Ernest, that it is I, Veronika, whom you are going to kill. Think, oh my loved one, think how you will suffer if ever you come to and realize what you have done. Oh, is there no way for me to bring him to himself!'

"Presently she continued, 'But tell me first what I have done.—Oh, I can not bear to die until I know that you don't suspect me of having wronged you in any way. Oh, Ernest, oh, if you would only speak one word. Oh, my

darling, do not kill me without speaking to me. Oh God, oh God! Oh, there, there, he is going to kill me; he will not speak to me. Oh, what have I done? Ernest, *Ernest!* Wake up—stop your arm—don't strike me. Oh God, God, God!'

"After it was over I dried my hands upon my handkerchief, turned out the gas in the hall, locked the door on the outside, put the key into my pocket, and went away."

What remains for me to tell? The above is what Merivale read to me. The above is what I had written. Could I doubt its truth? I did not, I do not, at any rate.

I am informed that a man once tried for murder and acquitted can not, as the lawyers put it, can not be placed in jeopardy again. But I am enough of a Jew to believe in eye for eye and tooth for tooth. I shall see to it that I do not escape that penalty which the law would have imposed upon me, had the facts I am now aware of come out at my trial. I shall see to

it that the murderer of Veronika Patńzuol meets with the punishment which his crime demands.

It has taken me a week to write out this account. I want the public to have it. No need to analyze the motives that prompt this wish. I shall confide the MS. to my friend Merivale with directions that it be printed.

I do not think of any thing more that needs to be said.

THE END.

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